

The Iconography of the Chase and the Equestrian Motifs of  
Eighth to Tenth Century Pictish and Irish Sculpture with  
reference to Early Medieval Celtic Literature.

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Irish, Welsh and North Britons.

Further, it is our contention that the visual and literary evidence is mutually illuminating. It is not argued that this is always and necessarily the case, although we believe it usually to be so. However, we insist that this is true in the context of the Irish crosses and Pictish cross-slabs which depict both hunting and riding vignettes. Of course, we shall attempt to demonstrate how and why the mutual artistic-literary illumination works. A fresh discussion of our motifs within Pictish and Irish contexts is presented here, not so much revisionist as pioneering. Particularly, an interdisciplinary art historical/Celtic Studies viewpoint is promoted through the coordination of the artistic and literary dimensions.

At the centre of our enterprise is the aim of heightening the understanding of the chase and the equestrian motifs upon the sculpture and within the texts. The detailed analysis of the literary and sculptural dimensions takes place in Parts Two and Three. This is followed by a concluding section, Part Four, which places the findings of Parts Two and Three into perspective and summarizes the whole. However, before proceeding to these analyses, there are methodological and terminological matters to be clarified. The questions of historical and cultural milieu are also to be established. These aspects are dealt with in the remainder of the Introduction and Part One in which questions of social and historical background are discussed along with a review of the evidence.

The art historical frame of reference is particularly complex. It encompasses post-classical Western European tradition with an element of continuity from Greco-Roman tradition. There is also an element of Celtic continuity linked to the tradition of the equestrian figure and chase in Gallo-Roman art. The Christian tradition as decanted through the Celtic Church, is the most prominent feature of

Pictish and Irish sculpture. This includes contemporary interaction in both the Christian European and Insular spheres alongside the more eclectic but undoubtedly native Pictish and Irish creative traditions.

As hinted above, our approach to all this is to expect and cope with the plurality of forces at work. In this sense, we suggest that there is a character of ambivalence inherent in the chase and the equestrian motifs (terms such as *ambivalent* will be discussed below). Basically, we reckon that the Pictish and Irish hunt and equestrian images are ambivalent motifs simultaneously representing a worldly and a divine symbolism. The understanding of which is to be deepened by an analysis of the artistic and literary dimensions of the sculpture.

This introduces the problem of the relationship between the visual and the literary evidence. The literary frame of reference carries its own set of difficulties. In particular, the disappearance of Pictish literature. It is argued below that one can justify appealing to other branches of Celtic literature in its lieu. Furthermore, conclusions of this discussion would suggest that the art historical evidence may be used to warrant the sometime existence and nature of lost Pictish literary tradition and bridge the gap left by this loss.

More generally, the question of the propriety of literature as an art historical source needs to be answered with respect to the materials. To anticipate, we shall be considering the highly visual qualities of Early Medieval Celtic literature which will be shown to correspond with the themes and compositional elements of the chase and the equestrian motifs in visual sources. Basically we can assume that literature and art illuminate each other as they express similar ideas, themes and motifs but in different media.

In summary then, we make the following assumptions and define our philosophical position as follows. The Pictish

and the Irish artistic traditions share in artistic and cultural influences within the Insular sphere with its influential contacts with Early Medieval Western Europe and the Mediterranean tempered by a more intimate culturally-specific artistic tradition. The chase and the equestrian figures within Pictland and Ireland are ultimately images of Christian symbolism capable of expressing religious and extra-religious symbolism simultaneously. In general, cross-slabs and crosses expressed the social and cultural prerogatives of the ecclesiastical and aristocratic segments of the society who commissioned and patronised their creation.

We are encouraged in our approach by a statement by K.McCone as it coincides with our approach. As McCone states in reference to early Irish mythology, it "must first and foremost be described as a contemporary attribute of the artistic, syncretistic but predominantly Christian culture and associated theology of those who produced the surviving written texts [monastic scriptoria]." <sup>2</sup> Also that "Irish monastic scholars were also heirs to a late classical and ecclesiastical tradition...[there was] a profound and creative interplay between their native and ecclesiastical inheritance to produce the thoroughly integrated hybrid medium in which all extant Irish literature, history and mythology seem to be rooted." <sup>3</sup>

## **PART ONE - Historical and Art-historical Context of the Chase and the Equestrian Motifs:**

### **Chapter 1 - Introduction, Theory and Definitions**

#### **i) Introduction to Part One:**

Before embarking on an analysis of Pictish and Irish hunt and equestrian motifs in Part Three, it is necessary to examine the generally accepted iconographic meanings, i.e. in a Christian context, of these scenes, and their artistic models. In Part One discussion of the general historical and art-historical contexts of the monuments under consideration shall take place. Chapter 1.1 will consider the historical-comparative context of the models and influences upon which the Pictish and Irish chase and equestrian motifs were based. The discussion of the art-historical and iconographical contexts of the chase motif and the equestrian motif follow in Chapters 2 and 2.1. The influence of patronage in the choice of image and symbolism is discussed in Chapter 3. These considerations significantly affect the iconographic interpretation of the chase and equestrian motifs as they appear upon Pictish and Irish sculpture.

#### **ii) Theoretical Presuppositions:**

Although the original meaning these sculptures once held has been obscured by time, discussion of the various possible meanings may help us determine what they most probably symbolised. If, as we suggest, the chase and equestrian motifs were intentionally ambivalent symbols, we must look especially for the signs of such deliberate ambivalence which could justify this assumption.

Early Medieval iconography is generally considered as having two branches, the religious and secular. However, iconography of this period, for example, that of the chase or equestrian, cannot be defined simply as 'Christian' or 'secular.' As we shall see, these motifs do not have such a polarised significance. The Christian and secular planes of meaning intersect and complement one another. There appears to be

little evidence to justify separation of the sacred from profane, or Christian from secular, in the iconography of the type of motif being discussed. The juxtaposition of sacred and profane levels of meaning within hunt and equestrian motifs makes for a clever contraction of different "visual voices."<sup>1</sup> The motifs themselves are multivalent.

When seeking to understand an iconographical image, it is necessary to take into account its earlier meanings and its range of contemporary meanings and contexts. As A. Grabar states: "By learning where, when, how and for what end a certain image was created, we begin to apprehend the religious significance that the image may have had to its creators."<sup>2</sup> In our case a wide review, embracing all Early Medieval occurrences of the hunt and equestrian, is essential if we are to understand their message in Pictish and Irish contexts.

An image can become stylised at a given moment in time, while its literal visual form is little changed.<sup>3</sup> This happened, we contend, to the hunt and equestrian motifs, perhaps because of their important symbolic function. The stereotyping of these images renders them easily recognisable for our purposes.

As we have stated, in order to understand a particular symbol we need to understand its synchronic context.<sup>4</sup> The same pictorial symbol can have distinct meanings in different settings. It may lose its original meaning and appearance through repeated copying, as evidently happened with the Pictish hunt and equestrian.<sup>5</sup>

The question of the origins of a symbol often leads us to literature. In most examples of Medieval symbolism a literary source or analogue can be found. The examination of possible textual sources for a motif is a valid method of furthering iconographical understanding where texts known to the artists can be identified. Iconography is an examination of the relationship between an idea and an image, aimed at



understanding the elements that make up a work of art,<sup>6</sup> its development and changes of themes. In this sense, a visual motif is elucidated if its chief elements can be matched within verbal sources. As Sister Charles Murray states, "By bringing together a knowledge of texts and a knowledge of pictures, the interpreter is able to fuse the subject matter and images...the evidence should then help to clarify the meaning of a story in a particular context, since meanings change over a passage of time..."<sup>7</sup>

This applies well to the investigation of iconographical images such as the Pictish and Irish hunt and equestrian. These appear to be influenced by Christian texts as well as native literary tradition of heroic nature. For this reason the examination of religious and secular literature available to and native to Early Medieval Celtic Society must be considered as certain Early Medieval images such as the hart and hound, chase and equestrian are not clear illustrations of a given biblical text.

A consideration of a motif's sources, models and development through time adds extra force and understanding to why a particular image is selected as part of an iconographical programme. An iconographic composition such as the hunt is formed of various elements or symbols which function together as a meaningful whole. The chase and equestrian as 'human' scenes are a choice of subject illuminated by the literary interpretations of the Early Medieval and Celtic intellect. The message intended to be conveyed by a symbol results in its chosen visual form and its execution.

The symbolic representation of a motif demands two reactions from a viewer; the eye and mind must collaborate in order to take full advantage of a symbolic image. While Pictish and Irish sculpture display an element of artistic and symbolic improvisation, they are still governed by a conventional repertory of Christian symbolism common



throughout the Britain, Ireland and the West.

### iii) Some Key Terms:

From general discussion, we turn to the terminology used to help elucidate the iconographical significance of the chase and equestrian in the following chapters. Certain art-historical terms, *iconography* and its components *symbol* and *motif*, will be discussed. Discussion of the terms *ambivalent*, *multivalent* and *complementary* used to describe the sculptural images of the chase and equestrian will follow.

Basically we follow the definitions of those scholars with a classical approach to art-history, such as E. Panofsky and E.H. Gombrich. Iconography is most simply, a language of meaningful images. However it also includes the meanings of an image, its current usage - its symbolism. Panofsky defines iconography as, "that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form."<sup>8</sup>

Iconography is the aspect of an image that informs and is addressed to the intellect of the spectator.<sup>9</sup> These images interpret ideas and themes in an artistic manner through visual media as a means of conveying information (eg. about a religion). Certain images are related to each other by their meaning such as a victorious equestrian figure, an arch of triumph or success in the hunt which all present the same theme expressed by images that are connected not by their form, but their content and can have as a source another image which does not resemble it formally.<sup>10</sup>

A symbol is an image which by custom or convention represents something else or conveys another possible meaning to its outward appearance. Symbols can have multiple and different references, depending on the belief system of the society that created them.<sup>11</sup> A symbol is an emblem of ideas connected with certain themes and concepts

designed to evoke meanings. Symbolism is a method of conveying information and ideas, a metaphoric use of language or visual images to convey certain ideas or conventions. It is a system of representation using symbols as an essential element of an iconographical system.

Numerous possible associations are evoked in the mind of the observer by a symbol. This gives a particular image its symbolic power. The image a symbol takes is controlled by the demands of legibility derived through a conventional repertory of forms. The symbol is thus recognizable immediately for its meaning as well as simply as an artistic motif. While a symbol may take the basic form required by convention, improvisation and individuality may be introduced, allowing an element of chance in composition. This allows for the simple fact that the images themselves are the creation of men - the artists, modified by the prevailing style of art of a period as are the chase and equestrian figures in Pictish and Irish art.

An artistic motif can be appreciated in many ways. A motif can be enjoyed visually for the beauty of its form, colour, texture or shape. Another dimension of the perception of the visual appearance of a motif is its appeal to the intellect according to what meanings or spiritual values the mind gives an to it.<sup>12</sup> A motif can be used with specific intentions, having a wealth of meaning and richness of imagery which in turn bestows multiple interpretations and layering of meanings.<sup>13</sup>

An iconographic motif is a building block within a composition functioning as a symbolic image. One can understand the whole through the parts and the parts through reference to the whole. Herein is the difficulty of the task facing the creator and viewer when confronting complex works of art. Compositions like the chase can modulate between a panoramic universal external view and a more intimate, culturally-specific identification. Motifs are a cohesive part of a composition, linking various

images that may appear to have nothing to do with one another.<sup>14</sup>

By the term *ambivalent*, I refer to the existence, in a given motif, of alternative values pertaining to the Christian and secular frames of reference, or, more generally, to motifs which have more than one meaning. As Camille suggests, "things that are ambivalent belong to more than one domain at a time."<sup>15</sup> The hunt/equestrian motifs are ambivalent, or indeed *multi-* or *polyvalent*, in the sense that they have more than one 'valence': that is, they have the capacity to contain several strands of meaning.<sup>16</sup> The term *complementary* indicates the relationship between such distinct strands or levels of meaning within a motif.

iv) Christian and Secular - an unnecessary distinction:

The chase and equestrian motifs certainly appear to be Christian, being exclusive to the Early Christian period (8th-12thC) of Pictish and Irish sculpture. However, the hunt and the equestrian images have also, and plausibly, been assigned a secular-political significance. The paradox, in our view, is only apparent.

Given our theoretical presuppositions and our terminology we are able to postulate ambivalency on a Christian/secular axis. There are good reasons for regarding this as a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or' situation. So any suggestions of a paradox disappear. It would seem that, with respect to our material, the apparently secular could have a Christian significance, and vice versa. This reminds us that Pictland and Ireland, though upon the fringe of Europe, were part of the Christian church that dominated Western Europe.

The function and form of a motif cannot be separated from its purpose or requirements of the society in which a given visual language may gain currency.<sup>17</sup> This may explain the similarity in form of the hunt and equestrian in art throughout Early Medieval Europe. It is to be stressed that it was in the interests of the secular aristocracy to appear to cooperate with the ecclesiastical milieu even though conflict was often present and to appear to be pious Christian rulers even if other values were followed.

Also, those commissioning these monuments perhaps regarded juxtaposing the secular and Christian as presenting little contradiction. The physical separation and compartmentalisation of the two concerns is expressed by the placing of the hunt and equestrian motifs in general on the reverse side to the cross on Pictish cross-slabs and the base of Irish crosses. However, one cannot divorce these motifs from the cross on the front of the cross-slab or cruciform shape of the Irish monument. These monuments are to be read as unitary statements, Christian and secular symbolism reflecting upon one another.

We need to consider the possibility that many possible interpretations exist for our motifs and did so at the period of the sculptures' production. Worldly subjects were readily incorporated into the sculptural scheme, and allowed to maintain their symbolism while taking in an extra layer of ecclesiastical significance in conjunction with the overall Christian inspiration of the sculpture. As we shall see, the purpose of such motifs is not naturalism, but symbolism, a characteristic of an image having iconographic value.

It is probable images that have survived from the pagan past and have secular connotations, have done so only after they had been adapted to a Christian viewpoint,<sup>18</sup> and contemporary social context. If the Pictish and Irish hunt and equestrian scenes have multiple and varied

references, it is impossible to assign any *one* meaning to these scenes. One must understand the complexity of Christian and secular meanings represented by a comparatively simple motif. As symbols these scenes are designed to evoke meanings having an *established usage* characterised by a degree of stylisation and stereotyping.

It is our aim to demonstrate that the chase and equestrian motifs upon Pictish and Irish sculpture were used to convey a multi-layered symbolism. Pictish cross-slabs and Irish crosses conveyed information over and above the immediate superficial meanings that come to mind. The motifs which make up a monument's programme singly and together with each other, are used to convey not only simple messages but more complex multi-layered meanings. These sculptures are obviously Christian, incorporating the Cross and other Christian motifs into their symbolic repertory. Additionally, something was also conveyed about social conditions. The stereotyping of the motifs and symbols make it almost certain that these were symbolic and not merely decorative images.

# Chapter 1.1 - The Historical Context of Chase and Equestrian Imagery - cultural contacts and possible sources:

Before beginning the discussion of Pictish and Irish hunt and equestrian iconography it would be wise to mention possible sources of such images. The aspect of sources raises the question of influence. In this chapter we consider the historical influences of cultural contact, ecclesiastical and secular as appropriate. A necessary question to be considered when examining the hunt or equestrian is from what models they may have been inspired and from where these models or ideas entered Britain. The appearance of these motifs around the early 9thC suggests that they were the outcome of models brought into Britain in the Early Medieval period and then exploited by Pictish and Irish sculptors.

We feel that Pictish and Irish hunt and equestrian motifs are not naturalistic as so often claimed, but formulaic images derived from models to serve a specific iconographic function. To test our claim that Irish and Pictish artists of the early Middle Ages worked from models rather than nature, it is necessary to examine what model or models were accessible to these areas.<sup>1</sup> A problem of tracing models is that original models are often lost.

A reconstruction of models from related work or work having similar motifs can help us to understand from whence artistic inspiration may have come and why a particular image is used. We agree with R.B.K.Stevenson that, "The study of this sculpture of a small country provides an unusual microcosm...because it is concerned...with the sources of inspiration and the way they were handled differently in each area, with the interplay of the traditions of the Celtic, Germanic, mediterranean and oriental worlds, pagan and Christian..."<sup>2</sup>

The artistic models for our motifs derive from the same sources as their iconographic meanings. The choice of



the motif is dependent upon its iconographical meaning. The hunt and equestrian do occur elsewhere in the Insular world but at different times or in different forms, making it necessary to look outside this area for wider parallels, and also for parallels in other media to provide an approximate account of the original motif.

Models for the hunt and equestrian may be sought in the Roman classical traditions of the Late Antique and Early Medieval world. Christian art drew on pagan artistic traditions, adapting and modifying them to its purposes. Christian iconography and images, came into existence in about the first two centuries after the foundation of Christianity and "the great majority of its distinguishing features were neither created nor invented by the makers of the first Christian images. Almost everything in their work was dictated by the models they followed; and it was actually because of this that the new Christian images they created were understandable to their contemporaries..."<sup>3</sup> Such is true of Pictish and Irish chase and equestrian motifs which also ultimately follow the immediate models of Early Medieval art.

Representations of hunting or riding were chosen not for their realistic portrayal of everyday aristocratic life, but for their symbolic significance, whether as secular or Christian manifestations of Christ's victory or prefiguration of the events of Christ's life. In this way they may be considered abstract images, as their intrinsic form may indicate. In order to understand the symbolism and nature of the oldest Christian images, they must be considered alongside non-Christian contemporary images as early Christian imagery was influenced greatly by the art of Rome.<sup>4</sup> In the case of equestrian and hunting images this included emperor images, military and triumphal art, funereal art and the semi-decorative villa mosaics of the Roman world.

Roman artistic tradition is rich in hunting and riding

images. These have a relevance to Pictish and Irish chase and equestrian motifs based upon similarity of formal composition. Similar representations upon Antique silver plates are relevant for the same reasons as well as their connection to the imagery of sovereignty as we shall see.

We agree with P.Harbison's suggestion that Italy was the ultimate source for much Irish cross iconography.<sup>5</sup> This influence probably came to Ireland through the Carolingian and Frankish Empires from models based upon manuscripts and frescoes.<sup>6</sup> Rome was the repository of iconography from the later Roman Empire and that derived from the East.<sup>7</sup> Irish cross iconography is understood best in the light of the renaissance of biblical narrative cycles in Western Europe during the second quarter of the 9th century.<sup>8</sup> Pictish cross-slab art is likely to have been part of the same artistic developments having a common source of inspiration in Rome.

The art of the Late Antique period played an essential role in the evolution of the Insular style. This ensured the continuation of classical tradition.<sup>9</sup> Byzantine artistic works were considered to represent the "highest picture of civilisation."<sup>10</sup> The Byzantine Empire included not only Constantinople and its dependencies but more distant areas such as Syria and parts of Italy. Contacts between Britain and Byzantium began at an early date as it had formed part of the Roman Empire.<sup>11</sup> The stimulus of the Mediterranean tradition, introduced through the requirements of the church, reached Britain primarily in the form of manuscript illustrations, objects associated with relics and paintings brought from Italy.<sup>12</sup> Such models also entered Britain, in part, via the Carolingian Empire.

Early Medieval Scotland, specifically Pictland, owed its Christianity to the missionary impulses of Irish monasticism during the 6th and 7th centuries. The art of this period, particularly Northumbrian, was greatly



enriched by impetus from classical and Near Eastern sources. The influence of such centres as Iona and Lindisfarne, dominated by Irish missionaries (around 650) resulted in great works such as the *Book of Durrow*.

Toward 700 these centres were the main disseminators and receivers of artistic influence from and to Pictland and Ireland when so many Roman works were brought to Northumbria.<sup>13</sup> The fusion of these many sources of style most likely took place in Northumbria and Scotland resulting in a hybrid of styles commonly termed as Hiberno-Saxon or Insular. The Irish monastic network in Northumbria and Scotland (Iona) was responsible for the flowering of this art and its transmission back to Ireland and thence across Europe.<sup>14</sup>

Pictish and Northumbrian contacts were close during the second half of the 7th century. Southern Pictland was occupied by the Northumbrians from 655 to 685 when a Northumbrian bishopric of the Picts was created.<sup>15</sup> Bede records that around 710 Nechtan, a Pictish king, sent messengers to Jarrow requesting knowledge concerning the Roman Easter calculations as well as masons to build a church in stone for him in the Roman manner from Ceolfrith in Northumbria.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that sculpting in stone was introduced by Northumbria.<sup>17</sup>

Pictland had contact with Northumbria and Ireland since an early date. Northumbrian art from the early 8th century showed a knowledge of Mediterranean, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon styles. Biblical motifs could have been introduced or transmitted as paintings on wood.<sup>18</sup> F. Henry mentions the 7th century description of such paintings existing in the church of the monastery founded at Kildare by St. Brigid.<sup>19</sup> Paintings are described by Bede in his account of the travels of Abbot Benedict Biscop, founder of Monkwearmouth (673-4), to Rome with Ceolfrith his successor, in which furnishings for his church were probably brought back to Britain with him including books,

relics, and paintings.

We find descriptions of these paintings occur in two of Bede's works, the *Historia Abbatum*<sup>20</sup> and his homily on Benedict Biscop.<sup>21</sup> According to Bede these paintings contained a variety of subjects such as the Virgin Mary and the twelve apostles, scenes from the Gospel story, and the visions of St. John's Apocalypse.<sup>22</sup> Further sacred objects were obtained on another trip to Rome by Biscop after founding Jarrow in 681.<sup>23</sup> While Bede does not mention hunt or equestrian scenes, similar portable objects may have introduced the necessary models for artists and patrons in Britain.

There is every possibility hunting and riding images could have been introduced complete with Christian usages to Britain in these ways. While this type of source probably acted as a direct influence on the development of Pictish and Irish art as a whole, it is worth noting that Northumbrian sculpture and illumination offer few examples of hunting besides archers and falconry. The interchange of cultural influence with Ireland could have occurred in this manner as well, through the connections of the monastic milieu of Iona and Northumbria, artistic inter-influence travelling to Ireland as well as from it.

The closeness of relations between Northumbria, Pictland and Ireland is illuminated by the manuscript art of these areas. Northumbria was influential not only for its monastic contacts but for its position as the meeting point of the Roman and Celtic churches and productive interchange with the art of two Celtic traditions, the Irish and the Pictish.<sup>24</sup> The major sources of Pictish inspiration when of foreign impulse appear to be "impregnated with the essence of Northumbrian/Mercian influence".<sup>25</sup>

Relations between Pictland and the Irish monastic centre of Iona were particularly close throughout the 7th and 8th centuries. Iona occupied an important and

influential position between Scotland and Ireland historically. The missions of Columba into the Pictish heartland are recorded in the saint's *Life*, the Picts traditionally accepting Christianity from this source.

An earlier mission to the Picts is possibly connected with the introduction of the Church by St. Ninian. However, the mission of St. Ninian was cut off from the Continental Christianity by the barbarian invasions. St. Ninian's Church failed to gain an organised existence but does suggest that the presence of Christianity in Scotland before the mission of St. Columba. This was a Roman influenced church.

Iona's position on an island off the west coast of Scotland was well suited as a catalyst of artistic exchange between Pictland and Ireland while also having contact with Northumbria. According to Bede, in 635 Aidan was sent from Iona at the request of King Oswald and established a monastery on the island of Lindisfarne in Northumbria. Both monasteries were of Celtic practice until the Synod of Whitby when Northumbria accepted Roman practice. However, contact between the two churches would not have been fully cut off. Relations with southern England were retained as the sculpture of these areas attest.

Iona acted not only as a centre of Christian learning, but as an artistic intermediary and centre in its own right. It is often deemed to be the place of origin of the *Book of Kells*, a manuscript with Pictish affinities<sup>26</sup> and has its own tradition of sculpted crosses. Kells became an important artistic centre when the monks of Iona fled there around 802 after Viking raids on the establishment. There is however, little Scandinavian influence present on the crosses or cross-slabs under consideration. As we shall see, later 10th century Anglo-Scandinavian hunts and equestrian motifs in stone are of different character (see Chapters 2 and 2.1 below).

The missions to the Picts would have familiarised the latter with the artistic traditions of Iona as well as

those of Northumbria. Aspects of Pictish sculpture correspond to the style and content of surviving illuminated manuscripts and may do the same for those that have not survived whether of foreign or native provenance.<sup>27</sup> For example, a close relationship exists between Pictish art and the evangelist animal symbols such as the Lion of St. John and the Eagle of St. Mark in the Book of Durrow and beasts and horsemen in the Book of Kells.

Contacts with Northumbria and through Northumbria to the Continent brought the same stimulus to Irish art as it had to Pictish, perhaps inspiring the development of figure sculpture in Ireland in the 9th century to a great extent.<sup>28</sup> The Irish and Pictish artistic connection was established earlier than the foundation of Kells, prior to 800 in Northern Britain. The diffusion of figure style and iconographies involved the complex traditions of these areas, and external influences through the circulation of manuscripts, small carvings such as ivories, and the movement of artisans and sculptors with their templates and pattern books.<sup>29</sup>

Irish and Pictish sculpture share various similarities. Harbison draws our attention to the difficulty of explaining this due to the generally accepted dating of Irish high crosses to the 10thC.<sup>30</sup> He suggests that by reference to comparative material from the Continent (see Chapters 2 and 2.1) Irish iconography would seem to best fit into the 830's and 840's as Pictish parallels may also do.<sup>31</sup> \* During this period, Kenneth MacAlpin united the Pictish and Scotie kingdoms. Iona probably acted as an intermediary of artistic influences as Irish centres such as Kells gained in prominence.

Kells crosses share affinities with Pictish sculpture in Angus and Perthshire, the region which has the most hunt and riding motifs. Likewise, Kells is rich in chase and equestrian imagery. Harbison suggests that as Iona appears to lack such iconography, Kells supplied it to Pictland.<sup>32</sup>

\* see APPENDIX, p.290a.

However, we believe it possible that these regions had a relationship of inter-influences. As we shall see, the Irish equestrian and chase images have affinities to Pictish representations. It is also possible that the Picts and Irish shared parallel influences or models for chase and equestrian motifs.

The Irish-Pictish-Northumbrian artistic connection in both manuscript illumination and sculpture is generally accepted. As Harbison states, "Irish High Crosses and Pictish stones need not be considered dependent upon one another, but are best understood as being inspired by a common source."<sup>33</sup> Connections and links between these groups of sculpture are difficult to define as they appear to be parallel developments sharing a "common impulse and starting point."<sup>34</sup> However, it is significant that hunt and equestrian motifs take such a prominent place in the sculptural repertoire of early 9th century Pictland and Ireland, while remaining foreign to Northumbrian art of the same period. These motifs are not found until a later period of Northumbrian sculpture and the west coast sculpture of Clydeside.<sup>35</sup>

What makes Pictish and Irish chases remarkable is that despite the importance of hunting in the life of Western royalty, it is a theme "*almost* [my italics] entirely ignored by artists in the West, even in the Carolingian period."<sup>36</sup> The chase was a familiar theme in Christian allegory, especially the stag hunt and hart and hound motif. It was adopted into early Christian art from late Roman sources such as sarcophagi depicting the deceased's activities or mosaic pavements, as an heroic and imperial rite.

Pictland and Ireland shared an ultimate stylistic and compositional model for hunt and equestrian images, "which had been translated into Christian forms at a given point, and then transmitted to Ireland [and Pictland] in a version somewhat removed from the original model."<sup>37</sup> This is

suggested by the similar approach to composition shared by the Pictish, Ionian and Irish monuments (especially those at Kells).<sup>38</sup> This is also suggested by the 'degenerative' features characteristic of Irish hunt and equestrian motifs suggesting that the Irish version is slightly later, and influenced by Pictish examples. The animals are out of proportion and squatter, the horses are broken-backed and the leg action is exaggerated,<sup>39</sup> all characteristics of later Pictish examples.

For a fuller understanding of chase and equestrian symbolism we must return to a consideration of potential sources and parallels. Eastern and Antique parallels for hunt and equestrian motifs are historically likely prototypes, but are difficult to find.<sup>40</sup> As M. Ryan points out, "contacts did exist between the far west and the east...the church was a multinational corporation and influences spread widely without *direct* contact".<sup>41</sup> It is important to remember that these images were chosen essentially for their inner significance and as such repetition from an already established type of the motif would ensure that its general symbolism was recognised immediately, as they belonged to a familiar trend of thought.

From here we move to potential sources of the chase and the equestrian motifs, starting with more remote, speculative sources not explained in proximate contacts and working down to contemporary sources. Each could account for the aspects of motif form and iconography as discussed in the following Chapters 2 and 2.1.



## Chapter 2 - The Art-Historical Context of the Chase Motif:

The art-historical context of the Pictish and Irish chase motifs shall be discussed here. We will begin with a discussion of the classical sources of influence which may have had a residual effect on the sensibilities of the 'native' Pictish and Irish sculptors. The consideration of sources of artistic influence and parallels in the proximate art of Carolingia and Northumbria which were ultimately derived from classical sources will follow in the course of our analysis. We need to consider all the possibilities in seeking to heighten our understanding of the Pictish and Irish chase motifs.

There is the possibility of contact with developed versions of the hunt motif such as Carolingian and Northumbrian images. Nevertheless, there is a need to mention the sometime availability of other channels of influence such as the classical tradition of Rome, British-Roman and early Celtic sources. Some vestiges are left of the occurrence of these motifs even allowing for the chronological gap. However, we accept that the proximate (6th-9th centuries) influences are more relevant, earlier material setting a precedent for acceptability and popularity of these motifs in Pictish and Irish culture.

Chase images occur in greater number upon Pictish than Irish monuments. We aim to show that the Irish and Pictish chase motifs shared similar artistic parallels and influences. This is apparent in the degree of similarity in the style, form and iconography between Pictish and Irish hunt motifs. This is reflected in the use of the chase as a Christian motif within the context of sculpture having iconographical programmes based upon Old and New Testament imagery.

We also aim to show that the general homogeneity of Pictish and Irish sculptural hunt motifs suggests that a limited number of models were available to the Pictish or

Irish sculptor, and specific examples were chosen for the iconographic messages they held. This homogeneity of composition and similarity in style suggest that the chase motif was not a spontaneous creation, but a copy of a specific type of model. Like the equestrian motif which forms part of many hunt compositions, this had as much to do with the symbolic usage of the motif as its visual form. The hunt motif, its heritage lying ultimately in non-Christian art, was adapted to Christian usage, not only for ecclesiastical purposes, but to express the status of a Christianised aristocracy.

The Insular chase motif is a hybrid of classical, Near Eastern, Carolingian and English artistic influence and models of preceding and contemporary generations. Pictland, Ireland and the south [England] shared common models, receiving them directly from imported objects as well as the complex interchange of artistic ideas that characterises Insular art of this period. The hunt motif was a product derived from models that had arrived in Britain by the late 8th century, and that had travelled north through a complex network of artistic exchange, probably arriving in Ireland and Pictland via monastic contacts, the Irish hunt betraying Pictish influence.

Christian hunt iconography may have derived from secular models. N. Edwards suggests, "Irish Christianity [which was that brought to Pictland] was extraordinarily tolerant of secular learning and there seems no reason why hunting scenes, which may have had little Christian significance, could not have become a popular motif."<sup>1</sup> From an early period of Christianity the chase motif was based upon the secular models offered by the Roman and Eastern spheres. The difficult problem is whether such Eastern and classical models used in 8th and 9th century Britain were actually as old as the 6th century or earlier or had been preserved by the tradition and style of Late Antique/early Byzantine art into the 8th century.<sup>2</sup>



The development of the image of the chase is not only connected with Imperial and villa art, but the use of the deer as a Christian image, especially its iconographical importance. The Pictish and Irish chase motif almost always involves a deer or stag hunt, the few exceptions generally illustrating a lion hunt. The lion hunt is a common motif of the ruler-images borne on Sassanian, Antique silver plates, and the private mosaics of Roman villas. In this sense chase models ultimately came from the milieu of Imperial and court art.

The lion is a potent Christian image as well, making appearances in various motifs such as *Daniel in the Lions' Den*, *David Rending the Lion's Jaws*, or images of St. Paul and St. Anthony in the Desert. Here the lion is a symbol of persecution, of God's Help, and the theme of salvation and deliverance. The lion as beast of the hunt in Imperial images is connected with the theme of political power or sovereignty. In Sassanian images, it is a king who hunts the lion. It also makes many appearances in the psalms, as a wicked beast preying on man. Like the deer hunt, the lion chase can be considered a Christian expression of the persecution of the Good by the Wicked.

We find the lion hunt on the St. Andrews sarcophagus, Kirriemuir No. 2 and Eassie, and in Ireland at Clonmacnois (perhaps also images of David the hunter). The Pictish and Irish examples are very similar to the ruler-images of the lion hunt on Sassanian and Byzantine silver plate and Roman mosaics. The lion is either placed leaping up in front of the horse or below the horseman. However, it is the deer hunt that appears most frequently upon Pictish and Irish sculpture and may have done so for its iconographical content. As we shall see below, the deer was an important Christian symbol within the context of the chase and on its own.

The chase was a popular Christian motif from an early period. It appears upon Early Medieval sarcophagi and

gilded glass vessels from the Catacombs.<sup>3</sup> These hunts probably had a pre-Christian background in Greek and Roman art, to which Christian symbolism became attached. The hunt as a Christian symbol has roots in Roman funerary art. The wealthy were buried in sculptured sarcophagi decorated with scenes illustrating the pursuits of the deceased in life and immortality. For example, the labours of Hercules, the greatest of hunters, suggested the heroic status of the dead and a victory over death (i.e. the Calydonian boar hunt on a late 2nd century AD Roman sarcophagus, German Archaeological Institute, Rome).

This idea became a significant part of the Christian symbolism of the chase. Also, the Clermont sarcophagus has hunting episodes in which spears are used in a lion and boar hunt, each beast driven towards the huntsman by hounds.<sup>4</sup> On a 6th century sarcophagus from Toulouse, a lion chase is portrayed.<sup>5</sup> These scenes were probably based on an ancient model such as Roman villa mosaic pavements.<sup>6</sup> Victory in the chase symbolised *virtus* and was an heroic and imperial prerogative.<sup>7</sup> However, what these early sarcophagi hunts fail to portray are deer hunts and thus, we must look further afield, for symbolic references.

The art of the landed estates of aristocratic Romans, such as mosaic pavements in rural villas, reflected social pursuits and ideals. The pastoral and sporting themes portrayed on villa pavements such as scenes of hunting, falconry and riding had an impact on the development of such scenes in early Christian contexts.<sup>8</sup> Grabar suggests that the mosaic pavements from Roman villa decoration served as a specific and important category of images with Christian meaning.<sup>9</sup> However, historical prototypes and method of transmission are difficult to find.

Mosaics portraying themes from contemporary life including the genre of the hunt, were produced in large numbers in the Roman world including Italy, North Africa

and Syria. Most of these hunt scenes seem to constitute a generalised illustration of the role of the hunt as a typical aristocratic pursuit and as an allusion to the owner's power in the field.<sup>10</sup> The Pictish and Irish chase is also a generalised illustration in this sense.

The Pictish and Irish hunt displays a lack of formal separation between the scenes of a chase composition like villa mosaic scenes. They also have a narrative element, common to the mosaic. They share with the mosaic hunt composition portrayal of episodes from a single hunt, registers that are not self-contained and skilful integration of the elements into a unified design with emphasis on narrative and action, each episode reduced to its barest essentials and illustrating the most dramatic incidents of the chase.<sup>11</sup> Such arrangements can be seen in the North African Carthage Boar hunt (mid 3rd century)<sup>12</sup> or the Hare Hunt from El Djem, Syria (3rd century). The attire of the hunters is usually contemporary, that of a rich young aristocrat, and the breeds of hound are recognizable on the mosaics.<sup>13</sup> This is also an aspect of Irish and Pictish chase motifs.

The mosaic chase hunter is often depicted on horseback or on foot accompanied by his hounds. The aim of this genre of illustration is to show the maximum of exciting action. The scenes of the chase are reduced to their single most dramatic incident. We feel this is just what we find in Pictish and Irish hunt representations. The aim of many of these mosaics, especially the later series was not naturalism, but to show the drama of action, and great numbers of beasts and men, resulting in the reduction of each element to its single most dramatic incident (death or pursuit of the beast).

The stereotyped format of the Pictish and Irish hunt whether featuring many beasts and men or a single hunt scene, also has this formal feature. The single hunter and deer of many Pictish and Irish chases is similar in

conception to the display of heroic single-handed combats on horse or foot of man against beast in mosaic art such as the Piazza Armerina in Sicily hunt (early 4th century).<sup>14</sup>

The different elements of the hunt theme within mosaic art add up to a general impression of realistic hunting scenes, expressed through a few simple formulae<sup>15</sup> often using a series of self-contained motifs for a degree of programmatic unity, a feature continued in the Pictish or Irish hunt. The composition of a mosaic in the main consisted of selecting and combining elements from an established range of elements for rendering hunt groups. We shall see that this is apparent with the Pictish chase composition, made up of the formal elements of the equestrian, deer and hound groups.

The hunt mosaic glorified the hunter by portraying him at the moment of victory. The chase becomes linked with heroic ideals and symbolic of victory. Hunting was regarded as the field in which a man's *virtus* was tested and represented man's struggle against strong and hostile forces.<sup>16</sup> This was the appeal of the chase as a Christian image. The iconography of hunting in Christian contexts is generally one of the pious man's struggle against persecuting forces represented by the quarry pursued by hunters and hounds.

The chase motifs on these private mosaics are a reference to the patron's wealth, reflected in his participation in the hunt and a desire to glorify the patron by showing him as victorious in the hunt. Where the hunter is portrayed on horseback, the equestrian figure is usually in a triumphal pose, reminiscent of horsemen on triumphal arches, sometimes raising his right hand with an open palm, the gesture of a victorious general, connecting the chase with military prowess. An example of this is the mosaic at the Villa of Bacchus, Djemila (end of 4th or early 5th century)<sup>17</sup> where a triumphal equestrian hunter confronts various beasts in front of his villa. We can

already perceive how the hunt in Early Medieval symbolism became connected with ideals of victory and sovereignty.

The Syrian metropolis of Antioch is also a rich source of mosaic hunt imagery from the early period of the Empire until the threshold of the Middle Ages.<sup>18</sup> Antioch, located at the hub of Orient is important to the development of Late Antique art and the transition from classical to Medieval art. This is the period when influences from the Greco-Roman heritage of the West and those of the East met and interacted, laying the foundations of Byzantine style.<sup>19</sup>

The later Antioch mosaic series (late 5th through early 6th century) is almost exclusively concerned with subjects of a genre nature, especially the chase. The mosaic artists of Antioch used each individual element as a building block, arranging each motif in space with complete freedom, encouraging progress from one group to the next, interconnecting with the one following and carefully arranged for overall unity. The Worcester Hunt, Antioch (mid 5th century)<sup>20</sup> is a good example of the Antioch type, the chase portrayed as heroic and at the peak of drama: the kill. The Pictish chase composition also uses each element as a building block, arranged to encourage a natural passage from one image to another, with all elements interconnected formally and thematically. Mosaics from other regions of the Empire such as Rome or Ravenna are markedly similar in style and iconography to the North African mosaics.<sup>21</sup>

Hunting mosaics are also found in Rome. In the Zliten Roman Villa, Room D (1st or late 3rd century), a frieze shows the agricultural activities of a large estate including motifs of leopard hunt, and a hunter levelling a spear at a deer chased towards him by a hound.<sup>22</sup> The small hound runs alongside the hart and leaps up to grab the stag's shoulder. The same arrangement of the motif is repeated in Pictish contexts such as Aberlemno No.3. The

chase is heroic and illustrated at the moment of highest drama.

On one of the hunt pavements found on the Esquiline in Rome (early 4th century) we see a hart and hound type motif. A hound pursues an antelope, leaping at the antelope's hindquarters.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps this type of representation inspired the antelope-like creature pursued by the foot-warrior on the St. Andrews sarcophagus which also includes other exotic beasts that often populate mosaics such as monkeys and lions.<sup>24</sup> These mosaics are generally connected with the Imperial palace of the Sessorium, and attributed to the Constantinian period. The hart and hound image is present in Pictish and Irish art and was adapted into Early Medieval symbolism, popular in psalter illumination such as the *Utrecht Psalter*.

The appearance of deer hunt and hart/beast and hound motifs in Imperial Rome around the late 3rd century, were connected with heroic tradition and imperial themes. The chase motif has a tradition of heroic and aristocratic associations and is always illustrated at a dramatic peak - the pursuit or the kill. Christian hunt imagery came to be associated with the same themes of victory and status, combining them with hunt symbolism of salvation and deliverance.

The chase motif is one of a limited "but not negligible Christian iconography which had its principal provenance in the villas...of the great landlord proprietors and which probably reflected their taste and ideas..."<sup>25</sup> In Christian imagery the chase becomes allegorical. The hunter drives or pushes back the beasts.<sup>26</sup> This is a characteristic feature of Pictish and Irish chase motifs, the actual pursuit or drive of the deer being the most important incident. The intention may be to show man's defense of the earth against wild beasts over which God reigns and is the domain of the church.<sup>27</sup> Thus, we can see how a secular theme was adapted to the



requirements of Christianity.

The Pictish and the Irish chase compositions share a feature of arrangement in which the figures and beasts seem scattered or suspended upon the visual plane in rows (registers) generally without indication of perspective or ground, each fitting in the space left by the others. This is a feature already apparent in the late Roman period as the use of perspective begins to be abandoned.<sup>28</sup> Henry suggests that the arrangement of figures in rows derives from the linearity of Roman mosaics where animals in hunt or circus scenes of identical size are placed in vertical or horizontal arrangements as on Late Antique silver.<sup>29</sup>

Byzantine and Sassanian plates often have rows of animals placed vertically being pursued by a king. Hicks suggests that the silver vessels of Traprain Law, Mildenhall, Sutton Hoo or others like them illustrate how late Imperial art introduced friezes and processions of animals into Britain.<sup>30</sup> It is a method of composition already familiar in early Celtic art such as the sword scabbard from Hallstatt (400-350 BC) showing equestrian figures, a pottery flask from Matzhausen with a frieze of beasts (early 4th century BC) or the Gundestrup Cauldron.

Antique silver plates are rich in the genre of the chase and are a portable art form as opposed to mosaics. The ruler-images of Late Antique silver and Sassanian plates offer parallels for the Insular hunt as well as the equestrian. The silver picture plates of Antiquity (dating from the 4th to the 7th centuries), reflect the religious, cultic, cultural and genre interests of a highly sophisticated and wealthy elite, both pagan and Christian.<sup>31</sup> The secular tastes of this wealthy class are reflected on these plates which are also a source of classical style. These plates were meant for display and in some cases as an imperial control stamp indicates, as gifts from emperors and occasionally from other notables to friends and other magnates.<sup>32</sup> It could have been likely

that such plates were owned by the Roman-Britons as part of their estate furnishings, perhaps imported from workshops in Rome or further afield.

There is little on these plates that would have offended Christian susceptibilities of this period. Many of the ideas symbolised here, such as life and happiness beyond the grave and kingship could be understood in a Christian sense.<sup>33</sup> Sassanian art displaying royal iconography is dominated by the art of the chase. The royal scenes of the king hunting in Sassanian art occur exclusively on silver plates, which were part of official court production (from about the 4th to 6th century).<sup>34</sup> Many of these plates were sent abroad as imperial gifts to neighbouring rulers or allies of the Sassanian Empire, where as official works of art they served to impress the recipient with the valour, prowess and wealth of the donor.<sup>35</sup> The impact of these hunts was in their formulaic representation of the ruler-hunter, expressing the power of repetition in visual imagery to shape the ideas connected with these acts. It is likely that the ruler-image of the hunter was adapted from Sassanian models and used in Byzantine hunting scenes from whence it travelled west.<sup>36</sup>

These chase scenes have military aspects; the huntsman is always armed with a sword, quiver, bow and dagger. Pictish and Irish huntsmen alike, are usually armed with a spear, round bossed shield, and a sword. The Sassanian huntsman is generally depicted mounted upon a horse in profile as are the hunters of Pictish and Irish chases. For example, a 6th or 7th century Sassanian plate depicts an archer-king hunting on horseback, with numbers of animals before and below him.<sup>37</sup>

Chase scenes are "allegories for human combats"<sup>38</sup> and it is conceivable that the Pictish and Irish hunt may have symbolised human combat, war and military pursuits as part of a warrior-king iconography like that displayed upon silver plate hunt images. The hunt became the standard



motif of the Sassanian silver plate symbolising the invincibility and divinity of the king from the 4th century until the dynasty's collapse in the 7th century.<sup>39</sup>

It is all very well to speak of the parallels in comparative iconographic interpretation between the royal art of Sassanian Iran's court and Pictish and Irish sculptured hunt scenes. How could such images have been made available to influence Western art and ultimately Insular Celtic art? While there is little possibility of direct influence, these ideas were bound to filter down through cultures in contact with the Sassanian Empire. The establishment of the new Roman capital on the site of the former Byzantium exposed the Court and the artists to a great degree of influence from lands beyond the eastern frontier, such as the Sassanian kingdom of Persia, a rich source of ruler imagery.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps, Sassanian royal hunt imagery and images accepted into the Romano-Byzantine milieu made their way West in a diluted form, the heart of the symbolic meaning retained and accepted into an "international" ideology of divine kingship, no doubt a powerful political tool in the hands of an aspiring ruling class.

The hunt is a popular genre motif of Late Antique silver plate. The arrangement of animals in registers without concern for indicating spatial depth, overlapping to depict some sense of spatial depth and the stylisation of figures are features of silver plate art. These are elements characteristic of the Pictish and Irish chase motifs. For example, a plate (6th-7th century) in the Bibliothèque Nationale, <sup>Cabinet de Médailles,</sup> Paris, depicting a king hunting on horseback attired in imperial garb, with numerous animals (lions, stags, boars) placed in front and below him.<sup>41</sup>

A 4th century plate from Risley, Derbyshire (recently "rediscovered" as a cast of the original lost Roman plate) of a boar hunt<sup>42</sup> illustrates the use of two different hounds for hunting, a greyhound type and a heavy set hound

with curling tail, a feature of some Pictish hunts and equestrian processions. Pictish equestrians are often presented one behind the other or as part of a hunt in a frieze-like fashion similar to a plate found near Concesti, Romania (about 400).<sup>43</sup> The equestrians, hounds, and arrangement of horseman in relation to the hound in these examples are of a similar type to those of Pictish and Irish chases.

Ryan suggests that it was common in the later Roman and the post-Roman world to acquire antique vessels of precious metal and semi-precious stone for church treasuries. There is also documentary evidence for the collection and importation of such vessels in western Europe in Carolingian and earlier periods such as the 9th century *Gesta Abbatum Fontanellensium* stating that Widolaic us, Abbot of St. Wandrille, obtained Alexandrian ewers and basins; and two inventories written by Heiric, 9th century author of *Gesta Pontificum Autissidorencium*, in his account of treasures obtained for the basilicas of St. Stephen and St. Germanus by Desiderius, Abbot of Auxerre in the 7th century.<sup>44</sup> It appears that important church centres in Merovingian and Carolingian times possessed late Roman vessels or others in that tradition imported from Byzantine workshops.<sup>45</sup> The monastic contacts between Britain and Gaul, the wanderings of the peregrini, clerics, scholars and pilgrims, meant that such treasuries were seen and descriptions or perhaps even objects themselves, brought to Britain.

While the above sources offer compositional and iconographic models for the Pictish and Irish chase, there are few examples of the deer hunt until the Early Medieval period. The Christian deer hunt is likely influenced by this classical and oriental chase motif background. A predominant element of Pictish and Irish hunt motifs is the deer and deer/hound group. The deer on its own could stand for Christ, as in some Catacomb paintings. Edwards suggests

that the ultimate source of this iconography was Christian Mediterranean art.<sup>46</sup> She goes on to state that the iconoclasm in Byzantium perhaps brought about a revival in classical mythology, including scenes of the hunt, this influence reaching 8th century Europe which are ultimately based on the hunting scenes of Rome.<sup>47</sup>

The hunt motif can be understood as the Christian soul pursuing Christ and salvation, or Christ's pursuit of the soul. The chase as a religious motif has varied meanings. The stag hunt could also represent Christ as a victim, persecuted by evil; the stag symbolising Christ and the hunter and hounds evil as we shall see below. The chase then can symbolise the Passion.<sup>48</sup> That there are several original meanings apparent for the Christian deer hunt, suggests that the motif may be multivalent.

These Christian iconographic interpretations of a common activity of Celtic aristocratic life, may also be applied to the interpretation of similar motifs in early Celtic literature. This concept of Christ, God or the Church as the hunter of errant souls is common in Medieval didactic works and Early Medieval illustrated manuscripts, such as the *Utrecht Psalter*. J.Cummins, points out the scriptural basis for this representation in literature and art from Jeremiah 16:16: "Behold, I will send for many fishers saith the Lord, and they shall fish them: and after I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks."<sup>49</sup>

The deer is the prey of the aristocratic huntsmen of Pictish cross-slabs, Irish crosses and literary tradition. We should also consider what the deer represented on its own or as part of different compositions in Christian and secular symbolism in order to illuminate our understanding of the deer as part of a chase. The deer often appears alone on Pictish Class II cross-slabs as an allegorical figure along with other allegorical and often fantastic

beasts placed alongside the cross on the main side. The stag is, "the principle bridge linking hunting to imaginative literature, to the scriptures, to the sainthood and to art...a magical animal, part of whose magic challenged the everyday craft of the huntsman."<sup>50</sup>

As it appears in the chase or in other motifs, the deer is the symbol of regeneration through baptism and thus often portrayed drinking at wells, springs or fountains. The deer and deer hunt derive Christian iconographical significance from the reading of Psalm 42(40), in which the stag, "thirsting for running waters " became a symbol of the soul thirsting for God. The deer commonly appears in this manner in early Christian art. For example a fresco in the baptistry of Pontien (6th-7th century), depicts the baptism of Christ in which a stag appears.<sup>51</sup> Two stags appear on a mosaic at Sens (only the feet now remain), drinking from a vase mounted on a pedestal between them, a foliated branch coming from the vase.<sup>52</sup> Below this image the passage "as pants the hart for water brooks..." from Psalm 42 is inscribed in Latin.<sup>53</sup>

The attitude the stag adopts in drinking from a fountain or river is that of one being taught through the catechism and receiving baptism. Psalm 42(40) was chanted by the catechumens immediately after their descent into the baptismal font.<sup>54</sup> The branch coming out of the canthare which separates the two stags may represent the Tree of Life, a symbol of regeneration procured through baptism.<sup>55</sup> The branch here then is the figuration of Christ or Paradise, as the Tree of Life, a complex image referring to baptism, paradise and regeneration. The deer and the water brooks is often found in connection with imagery of Paradise. The vase between the stags represents a eucharistic vase. At Sens the stag is not shown drinking but grazes on a leaf of the branch emerging from a vase. This may well also represent the participation in the Eucharist and the absorption of the blood of the Saviour

contained in the chalice, the symbol of the flesh eternally restored and renewed of Christ.<sup>56</sup>

Saint Jerome after comparing the catechist to the deer in his commentary on Psalm 42(41) concluded, "He wants to come to Christ in whom is the well of light, so that, cleansed by baptism, he should accept the gift of forgiveness of sins."<sup>57</sup> In such an interpretation, we can see the acceptability of the stag in the context of a chase composition as the soul pursued by Christ receiving salvation through Christ and baptism.

Psalm 42 was already used as a prayer in the baptismal liturgy of the Early Medieval period<sup>58</sup> emphasising the baptismal associations of the hart. Two stags are placed at a spring in a lunette mosaic in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia (mid 5th century) in Ravenna.<sup>59</sup> The mausoleum was built as an annex chapel of the Basilica of the Holy Cross and may have served as a baptistry.

The stag also features frequently on the mosaic pavements of ancient baptistries, on the sides of baptismal fonts and sometimes as part of scenes of baptism. Two mosaics at the baptistry of S.Giovanni, Naples depict two stags framing the image of the Good Shepherd, drinking from a stream which gushes from a rock representing the Four Rivers of Paradise.<sup>60</sup> Paradise represents the Church, which bestows the water of life and regeneration through baptism. Stags are emblems of the catechumen, quenching their thirst in the sacramental water for their salvation and pardon.<sup>61</sup>

That this iconographic understanding was persistent if not conventional throughout the Medieval period is suggested by its use in later manuscripts such as in the Bury St.Edmunds Psalter (second quarter 11th century) an illustration accompanying Psalm 41:2-3 on fol.54, depicting a stag in the outer margin drinking from a stream.<sup>62</sup> Images of the hart such as those above confirm a baptismal symbolism which may indicate why the stag was chosen as the



object of the chase in Early Medieval Insular sculpture. The stag represents the wayward soul pursued by the word of Christ and gaining salvation and forgiveness through baptism.

Further reasons for regarding the stag as a symbol of baptism and rejuvenation are the legends of the *Physiologus*. The *Physiologus* is a 'natural history' containing biblical allegories of animals that also appear upon Pictish and Irish sculpture. These beasts, both real and fantastic, such as the manticore or hyena with a human limb in its jaws, require this type of text for symbolic interpretation. The stag is also included in the *Physiologus*. Whether or not the *Physiologus* is responsible for such animal representations, familiarity with its allegories is suggested as Bede shows knowledge of these. Its relevance may be indirect, the *Physiologus* known through authors like Isidore of Seville. Deer appearing singly as allegorical figures appear on Pictish and Irish sculpture such as Dunfallandy and Ty broughney. For example, the centaur on Meigle No.2.

*Physiologus* was for the most part an established source from which much of Medieval Christian animal symbolism was derived. The text of the *Physiologus* is a collection consisting of fabulous stories and pseudo-science concerning the nature and qualities of animals, birds, plants and stones often amounting to a fable including Biblical references and allegories to show their religious meaning.<sup>63</sup> The date of its initial compilation is unknown and the earliest extant illustrated Latin manuscript containing the text is the 9th century MS.Codex 318 or "*Bern Physiologus* (MS Codex 318, Stadtbibliothek, Bern)<sup>64</sup>).

The text was likely to have been compiled or written in the 2nd century, somewhere in the cultural sphere of Alexandria, an important centre of learning and culture.<sup>65</sup> The collection, first written in Greek was either discovered or compiled by a Christian writer who added the



allegories, influencing the choice of contents and their description. The text is known to Bede in his treatise *De naturis bestiarum*.<sup>66</sup> It is puzzling that so little influence of the *Physiologus* is found in Western Early Medieval art, even though it was read and quoted by Ambrose and Gregory the Great (540-604).<sup>67</sup>

In bestiaries, such as *Physiologus*, the deer came to be an allegory of regeneration through baptism. Other texts were also influential. For example, St. Isidore of Seville (archbishop of Seville AD600-d.636) and his great encyclopedia, written at the request of bishop Braulio of Sargossa. Book XII, *De Animalibus*, remained one of the standard authorities along with illustrated versions of the *Physiologus* for almost all writers and illustrators of natural history until the 13th century.<sup>68</sup> The *Etymologie* of Isidore was a work which effected a change in the content of the *Physiologus*, many of the passages in this text resembling the *Physiologus*.<sup>69</sup> E. Klingender describes it thus, "a remarkable example of the power of the animal symbol to blend a host of distinct meanings and overtones, distilling their essence, as it were, in a single image."<sup>70</sup>

The *Physiologus* account in Latin versions such as the earliest extant illustrated version, the 9th century *Bern Physiologus* (MS Codex 318, Stadtbibliothek, Bern),<sup>71</sup> refer to Psalm 42. The Psalm reads as follows, "As the stag longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee God" and Psalm 42:1, where the stag is the enemy of the serpent. The *Bern Physiologus* relates that "The stag is the natural enemy of the serpent (dragon) that he draws out from his hiding place in the crevice of the rocks with water from the fountain, and then kills the serpent by trampling upon it."<sup>72</sup> This is accompanied by an image of a stag attacking the serpent with its antlers.<sup>73</sup> As the stag tramples the serpent after driving it from its hole with water, our Lord killed the devil, with the heavenly waters of indiscernible

wisdom, as the serpent cannot bear water, the devil cannot bear heavenly words.<sup>74</sup>

There is also a reference to Psalm 104:18, "And David said, 'The high mountains are for the stags' and calls the apostles and prophets mountains, and stags the faithful men who attain to knowledge of Christ through the apostles, prophets and priests. Also Psalm 121:1, "I have lifted my eyes to the mountains whence my help will come". These Psalms are used in way of allegorical explanation of the legend.<sup>75</sup> According to *Physiologus*, the stag is the symbol of Christ, who triumphs over the enemies of the soul represented by the serpent, through the blood and water poured from his side on the Cross.

The stag became part of the traditional allegory representing the soul driven to the Church and thus to Christ to take refuge. The stag is presented as a redeemer from sin, the Christ who vanquished the serpent.<sup>76</sup> The stag became a symbol of Christ's victory over Satan; its trampling of the serpent a reference to the conquest of Satan.<sup>77</sup> This emphasises why the stag may have been chosen to be represented in hunt motifs appearing in ecclesiastical contexts such as Pictish and Irish hunt compositions.

The *Physiologus* and bestiary legends are also found in other sources which were known in Early Medieval British contexts, such as Isidore of Seville's Book XII of the *Etymologiae*. In Isidore's version there are two entries concerning the stag which follow the *Physiologus* entries. The first relates that stags "are the enemies of the serpent, whom they draw from their holes by means of the breath of their nostrils whenever they feel ill, for the poison heals them as soon as they eat the snake-meat."<sup>78</sup> The influence of Isidore's work on Medieval learning would have served to emphasise the allegorical interpretations accorded various beasts in Medieval bestiaries. Bede shows knowledge of it in his treatise *De naturis bestiarum*.<sup>79</sup>

For example, Bede composed two short school texts for the use of his pupils at Jarrow in 703, *De natura rerum* and *De temporibus liber* which have extracts from Isidore's *Etymologiae*, Macrobius and Pliny's *Natural History*.<sup>80</sup> This is one way in which the allegories of the *Physiologus* could have reached the Picts through contacts with Northumbria.

A variant that is also present in Isidore of Seville's writings and similar sources gives the quarry as man the sinner and Christ as the pursuer. This is most clearly articulated in the *Hortus Deliciarum*, a 12th century text based upon earlier sources. The *Hortus Deliciarum* is a text probably written at Hohenburg, sometime before 1176-c.1196.<sup>81</sup> Its contents include allegorical recapitulations from the Old Testament, material on the ancestry of Christ and the Incarnation, gospel narrative and commentary among other subjects.<sup>82</sup> Sources for this text include Isidore's *Etymologiae* found in the *Summarium Heinrici* (about 11th century), in a condensed and reorganized form, supplemented from Priscian, Bede and Cassiodorus.<sup>83</sup> Even though the *Hortus Deliciarum* may appear to be a rather late text to refer to in this study, that it was based on a text supplemented by earlier texts, suggests that the ideas contained therein, may have been current during the Early Medieval era.

The *Hortus Deliciarum* states, "We offer to God our spoils of the chase, when, by example or precept, we convert the wild beasts, that is to say, the wicked man. The chase of the Christian is the conversion of sinners. These are represented by hares, by goats, by wild boars, or by stags...the stags are the worldly wise. These beasts we smite with four darts by our example of continence, humility, voluntary poverty, and perfect charity."<sup>84</sup> This is an allegorical basis for chase imagery and the stag as a part of it. The deer chase became a figure of Christ's pursuit of the soul and as the Christian soul tempted by sin or persecuted by evil in the form of huntsmen and

hounds.<sup>85</sup> The chase is a motif of divine persecution as well as a positive Christian image.

The psalter was the most studied work in the early Irish Church as well as the British. Psalter singing is a central part of the office in the Rules of Columbanus.<sup>86</sup> Besides the important office of the Mass, committed Christians were expected to devote part of the day to prayer, by taking part in corporate worship consisting mainly of prayers for divine help and the singing of the psalms being prayers of the entire Christian community not just the clerics.<sup>87</sup> However, there is meagre evidence of any homogeneity in liturgical practices of Celtic Christianity, as in Ireland churches and monasteries were relatively autonomous suggesting degrees of divergence.<sup>88</sup> In Pictland some degree of homogeneity may have existed under the Columban mission and then the Roman practices of the Northumbrian monasteries. The stag of the Psalms would have been a well-known image and as a hunted beast formed a visual motif that recalled this symbolism.

It is no wonder that the psalms figure largely in hunt symbolism due to the reasons discussed above. This motif triggers by visual means pious thoughts upon Christian life within the ecclesiastical and secular spheres to whom the psalms were well-known. For example, the deer of the psalms is associated with Old Testament and Garden of Eden symbolism. The iconography of the chase and the stag, are intimately bound to symbolism derived from the psalms and themes of Christian salvation and deliverance. The chase motif, especially the deer hunt, expresses a liturgical symbolism. Motifs such as the hunt were constructed to aid in Christian contemplation and prayer. The representation of baptism and psalmic matter (i.e. David imagery) symbolises one of the sacraments of the Church. This symbolises the intervention of God and participation in these sacraments assuring the salvation of the dead.

The monks of the Celtic Church were great reciters of

the psalms and St. Columba ordered the entire Psalter to be recited in two offices.<sup>89</sup> The ritual and liturgy of the Insular churches (British and Irish) were based upon imported models, however much they diverged from them, and monasticism formed a part of Insular Christian practice from an early stage.<sup>90</sup> Baptism was an important part of the liturgical practice. According to Bede, the British practice of baptism was one of the issues on which Augustine of Canterbury took up with the British bishops.<sup>91</sup> There is a baptismal service in the early Irish manuscript, the *Stowe Missal* which is basically of Roman form, following the Gelasian Sacramentary.<sup>92</sup> The <sup>*Benedictio Fentis of the*</sup> *Stowe Ordo Baptismi* opens with the reciting of Psalms 41, 28;<sup>93</sup> the Psalm referring to the stag and water brooks.

Also, the Insular milieu would have been familiar with the psalms through the text written by commentators upon the psalms. The Early Medieval world learned how to read and understand the psalms through texts like Cassiodorus' commentary on the psalms.<sup>94</sup> The psalms were one of the most familiar books of the Bible in the Early Medieval period and many glossed and illuminated psalters have survived attesting to the importance of the psalms in Anglo-Saxon and Continental contexts.<sup>95</sup>

Cassiodorus provided a Christian explanation of the psalms' meanings and their prophetic nature as both commentators and artists wished to show how the Old Testament prefigured and prophesied the events of the New.<sup>96</sup> Cassiodorus was a 6th century Italian statesman, advisor to Theodoric and his successors, and founder of a monastery known as the Vivarium where he established a school of Christian studies and scriptoria.<sup>97</sup> Bede had likely seen a Cassiodoran bible, the *Codex Grandior*, and was the first Western European writer to refer to him by name, drawing heavily on Cassiodorus for his own writings.<sup>98</sup> Some of the books from Cassiodorus' library



may have eventually reached Northumbria and Jarrow upon his death.<sup>99</sup> The *Durham Cassiodorus* (c.750/755) attests to the popularity of Cassiodorus' work.

The image of the deer pursued by a hound is a significant element of the Pictish and Irish hunt motif. This image is generally referred to as the "hart and hound" motif. As discussed above the stag was adopted early by Christian commentators as a symbol of Baptism or Christ Crucified, as well as in Christian encyclopedias and bestiaries for its enmity against the serpent, signifying both Christ and the Christian.<sup>100</sup> The hart and hound grouping has several possible Christian interpretations. The importance of the combination of hart and hound motif is related to the Psalms, an essential part of monastic liturgy.<sup>101</sup> Through its illustrations, the Carolingian *Utrecht Psalter* suggests the importance of the hart and hound in the Psalms. The Psalter, written about 830 in the abbey of Hautvilliers near Rheims, contains illustrations of stags pursued by hounds.

As the Irish and English sent missionaries and scholars to the Continent during the 8th century, not only was Insular art known in these areas, but interacted with the art produced at the court of Charlemagne.<sup>102</sup> In 781 Alcuin of York, joined the entourage of Charlemagne as a teacher and advisor.<sup>103</sup> Alcuin acted as an instructor at the court school in Aachen working on a major revision of the liturgy and biblical text at Charlemagne's behest and providing a point of contact between the Carolingian court and the English royal and ecclesiastical spheres, ideas and information passing back and forth through his correspondence and contacts.<sup>104</sup> As Alcuin was a Northumbrian it is reasonable to think of Northumbria being influenced by the Carolingian intellectual and artistic renaissance.

A network of artistic interaction between the two countries was established by the 8th century, just the



period when the chase with the deer and hound theme entered the Pictish and then Irish repertoire. It is from such a source that the iconographical understanding and formal image of the deer and hound and the chase as a whole probably issued. The deer and hound motif is constant in its main features and of stylised form. It is only variable within limits. It is this element that allows one to trace the motif's probable sources. The deer and hound was chosen, in a recognisable and repeated form, to express certain Christian ideas, within a chase composition.

The *Utrecht Psalter* in iconographical terms clearly has relevance to our discussion. If we take the *Utrecht Psalter* as an example, we have a strong argument to support a Christian interpretation of our monuments, in particular an Old Testament psalmist interpretation. Of course, the *Utrecht Psalter* is a problematic source in various ways, not least its uniqueness. We believe it is possible to argue for a classical Italianate background for the *Utrecht Psalter* which could also be relevant to Pictish and Irish sculpture.

The deer and hound theme generally shows one or two hounds leaping onto the back or seizing the deer's shoulder, haunch or leg. Pictish and Irish deer and hound images are the earliest in the Insular milieu. It does not appear on Northumbrian or Manx sculpture before the Viking period, being first introduced into these areas in the 10th century, and can be traced back to earlier Mediterranean art.<sup>105</sup> Hunt compositions incorporating the deer and hound motif begin to appear in Pictish and Irish sculpture in the 9th century. The hart and hound generally appear as part of a larger hunt composition in Irish and Pictish sculpture.

Illustrations accompanying the psalms in the *Utrecht Psalter* show a stag pursued by hounds, the latter as a symbol of evil and persecution. The *Utrecht Psalter* illustration of Psalm 42 (Psalm ~~41~~, fol.24v) shows the hart fleeing the woods towards a mountain-spring pursued by

two hounds. These are animals for<sup>which</sup> there is no textual basis according to R.N.Bailey.<sup>106</sup> The spring flows into a lake where a group of soldiers push the psalmist into the water (v.2,1 & 8,7), representing the enemies or persecutors of the psalmist.<sup>107</sup> The image of the hart and hound is probably a reflection upon this central image, especially when the symbolic import of Psalm 42 is considered. The psalmist's persecutors are represented by the hounds<sup>108</sup> as symbols of evil and persecution. Cassiodorus saw the hart seeking water as the figure of the soul coming to the fountain of life.<sup>109</sup>

The stag of the *Utrecht Psalter* is a similar type to that appearing in Pictish and Irish sculpture with its small wedge-shaped head with rounded forehead, proud head-carriage, flying gallop pose, antlers spreading from the poll before the ear curving back slightly and long slender legs. The hounds are of the familiar greyhound type, the hindmost dog wearing a collar as Pictish hounds do at Meigle Nos.2 and 26, and Dull (all Class III stones). The harts in these examples are pursued by two or three hounds, the number that often pursue the deer in Pictish examples such as Hilton of Cadboll, Aberlemno No.3, St.Vigeans No.1 and Burghead No.7. The *Psalter* examples are stags, suggesting a possible source for antlered deer on Pictish and Irish sculpture of the 9th century. The very composition of the *Psalter* scenes, like the Pictish hunt compositions, their decoration and motifs such as the hart and hound, show the profound impression which the mosaics, silver dishes, frescoes and manuscripts of Rome had made upon the Carolingian artists.

Also, in the *Utrecht Psalter* illustration for Psalm 90 (fol. 53v, Psalm 90 (91)), the psalmist's plea to be freed from the huntsman's snare is illustrated as a hart pursued by two hounds and a huntsman (v.3 *liberavit me de laqueo venantium*).<sup>110</sup> In a commentary by Bede the symbolism of hunters is that they are devils (*venantes uel venatores sunt*

*diaboli*).<sup>111</sup> The psalms were one of the most familiar parts of the Bible in the Early Medieval world through their daily repetition in liturgy, prayer and in exegesis, emphasising their prophetic character.<sup>112</sup> The theme of the hart and hound is present in the psalms in contexts in which exegesis interprets the hart as the Christian soul.

An interpretation based on Psalm 21 ("My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me") illuminates the meaning of the hart and hound theme. This passage was important as its opening words were the ones Christ invoked at the moment of his Crucifixion.<sup>113</sup> All commentaries, such as St. Augustine's, interpreted this text then did so in terms of the Crucifixion and resurrection.<sup>114</sup> In verse 20 of Psalm 21, the psalmist pleads for his soul to be delivered from the sword and his darling from the power of the hounds and in verse 17 the dogs surround him. Hounds appear in passages which were understood as allusions to Christ's passion. Cassiodorus' comments on verse 21 describes dogs as forces threatening the Church.<sup>115</sup>

Bailey also points out that this psalm in its Medieval vulgate versions includes the hart. A note at the beginning of the psalm reads *pro cervo matutino* (as to the hart at dawn).<sup>116</sup> The commentary of pseudo-Jerome who Bede followed on this note, wrote that "but by the hart, who kills serpents and drinks the venom, we understand nothing other than Christ."<sup>117</sup> This is an interpretation familiar from *Physiologus* legends describing the stag. Bede takes this interpretation further by writing, "However in Hebrew it is written: according to the hart at dawn, by which there is no doubt that the same Lord is signified who killed serpents and ate poisons, and who, while the Jews were pursuing him with dog-like madness, made for the heights of the heavens."<sup>118</sup> This image was known in commentaries and exegesis on the psalms associated with the Church Fathers. It was familiar to Cassiodorus and Bede, suggesting that the hart and hound motif was known from an

early period in the Insular sphere.

The visual image of the hart pursued by hounds towards the heights is illustrated beautifully in the *Utrecht Psalter*. The hart in Psalm 21 is Christ and the menace of the dogs is a figure of Christ's passion. The hart and hound can be interpreted as a Christological image, as a symbol of Christ's passion, and of salvation and deliverance. On Pictish and Irish sculpture, the motif appears in conjunction with human figures, warriors, horsemen and various other beasts suggesting that these scenes may well also symbolise the wealth and status of the figures involved or being commemorated by the monument.<sup>119</sup>

We believe that the connection of the Pictish and Irish chase motifs with the *Utrecht Psalter* hunts can be sustained at an historical level, being connective as well as illuminating. It could be postulated that a school of classical Italianate influence, such as Rheims, may be responsible for the models of psalters like *Utrecht* and Pictish and Irish material. Seventh or 8th century models for the *Utrecht Psalter* may have been produced in a Greco-Italian centre of artistic production.<sup>120</sup> Perhaps it was from such models like the *Utrecht Psalter* that the Picts and Irish derived their hart and hound motifs. Knowledge of the influence of the Christian East on the Medieval art of the West was largely confined to Ravenna and southern Italy, which were occupied for long periods by the Byzantines.<sup>121</sup> Craftsmen from the Near East and Greece worked in the West, especially Italy,<sup>122</sup> and it is perhaps from such a milieu that the influence of the chase from mosaic or silver plate art entered the West.

Such Eastern Christian inspiration is found in the *Utrecht Psalter*. Greeks and Syrians were known to be found in the court of Charlemagne, probably as scholars.<sup>123</sup> D.Tselos suggests that the manuscript model for the Psalter is linked to an interest in the psalms of the Syrian Pope Gregory III (731-741). This model may have been part of the

collection which Greek and Syrian scholars took with them to assist Charlemagne with the editing of liturgical texts.<sup>124</sup>

The *Utrecht Psalter* illustrations, which include examples of the hunt and hart and hound, were probably copied from a single model as the kind and number of errors of the miniatures suggests.<sup>125</sup> The model likely originated in a centre with large collections of illuminated Greek manuscripts where the art of illumination was at that period of a high level with a long tradition behind it, such as a Greco-Latin centre in Italy.<sup>126</sup> The art of the Carolingian Renaissance was largely dependent on the tradition of Rome and influences from the Christian East. The integration of these elements is evident in the *Utrecht Psalter* as well as the classicising art of North Britain. The deer and hound is a motif linked with the psalms. The illustrations in the Carolingian *Utrecht Psalter* (9th century) or its model (7th or 8th century?) may be the possible source of the 9thC occurrence of the motif in Pictish and Irish sculpted hunts.

The Pictish and Irish chase can take the form of a simple or pared down hunt motif, consisting of one to two horsemen, a deer and one to two hounds. This type of hunt motif, is likely derived from the same type of model as the more developed Pictish hunts. The deer generally have antlers and are pursued by a hound or hounds and horsemen. This is the type of scene often encountered as an element of a larger composition in mosaics of Roman tradition as well as psalter illustration such as the *Utrecht Psalter* fol.53v. Pictish and Irish sculptors of stones like Scoonie or Clonmacnois, have taken single compositional elements found in the larger hunt compositions for the simplicity of its visual impact and iconographical meaning. That the deer generally have antlers in these chases, use of hart and hound theme, and the general compositional arrangement, suggests that these hunts are the result of influences or



models arriving in Northern Britain by the 9th century, such as illustrated psalter texts similar to the model behind the *Utrecht Psalter*.

Many of the Pictish and Irish stag chases occur on monuments which for stylistic and iconographic reasons may be attributed to the mid-9th century, contemporary with a possible model of the type behind Carolingian manuscripts like the *Utrecht Psalter*. However, besides the hart and hound and hart and hound pursued by a horseman in the *Utrecht Psalter*, Carolingian manuscripts offer few parallels to our chase motifs. Harbison suggests that Carolingian fresco cycles were an important formative influence upon Irish cross Old and New Testament iconography.<sup>127</sup> In Irish and Pictish scenes men on foot or horseback drive game with aid of various weapons. Harbison draws our attention to chase scenes of "slightly different nature" on carvings in the 'Lombardic' style in Northern Italy.<sup>128</sup> For example a chase from the Civit  Castellana showing horsemen with spears and men on foot pursuing a boar with hounds, placed one above the other.<sup>129</sup> This is similar to chases on the base of the Castledermot south and Kells Market crosses in Ireland.<sup>130</sup> That such chase motifs reached Ireland by the 9th century is suggested by the presence of hunt motifs in the *Utrecht Psalter*.<sup>131</sup>

However, such iconography may have been derived from fresco cycles like those described decorating the Ingelheim palace walls under Louis the Pious by Ermoldus Nigellus (around 826).<sup>132</sup> These may have derived much from the influence of Italian examples as mentioned above. Perhaps, chase scenes also formed part of these biblical fresco cycles - they certainly do in psalter illustration. While much of Irish cross biblical iconography is suggested to have parallels to the *Stuttgart Psalter* produced in northern France in the 820's and 830's like the *Utrecht Psalter*.<sup>133</sup> The Irish chase motifs are closer to the *Utrecht* examples. This psalter iconography may have been





influenced by fresco cycles like that at Ingelheim . It is possible for sculptors to make use of various sources of inspiration - one for Old and New Testament images and one for chase images for example. We agree with Harbison that Northern France was likely the area from whence such iconography came, such as Rheims.<sup>134</sup>

Kells is likely to have been the first centre in Ireland to receive such influence, showing the strongest traces of hunting and animal images of the Italian type of any Irish crosses and perhaps disseminated this iconography throughout Ireland and Scotland.<sup>135</sup> Pictish sculptors in Angus (Aberlemno), Perthshire (Meigle) and St.Andrews may have been the earliest to make use of these sources, having a rich tradition of hunting and riding motifs on cross-slab sculpture.

A variation of the hart and hound theme is found in the *Book of Kells*. On fol.48r, a greyhound-like dog pursues a hare.<sup>136</sup> Hounds coursing hares are found as part of hunting mosaic themes. The Rheims school of illustrators frequently used animals as decorative motifs at the tops of canon tables which may suggest an inspiration for a similar feature in the *Book of Kells* and Pictish sculpture.<sup>137</sup> This may be the case with the hound and hare motif as well as the chase with deer and hound in the context of Pictish and Irish sculpture may have been similarly influenced by a Carolingian court school manuscript.

Illustrations of deer hunting are also found in an Irish manuscript in the British Library, MS.Egerton 88 (about 9th century) on fols., 29v, 30v, 31, 32, 32v, and 34 (also 52 and 53 which appear to be crude imitations of the original cartoons).<sup>138</sup> On fols.32 and 32v, for example, hart and hound themes are found, the one on fol.32 being a fine example of the hart seized by the hound. The date of this manuscript suggests that, the hart and hound groups may also be the result of a similar inspiration as Pictish and Irish sculptural renditions of the motif.

To sum up so far, the ultimate origin of the hart and hound theme is probably in late Imperial and Early Medieval Mediterranean art. It is perplexing that early Northumbrian sculpture, which derives much from Mediterranean sources, did not adopt this motif into its iconographical and visual repertoire. Northumbria though, may very well have been the conduit for such a motif to reach Pictland from England or the Continent, and thence Ireland through the complex network of monastic contacts. The deer and hound motif as it is generally found in Pictish and Irish sculpture with one or two hounds pursuing a deer may derive from Carolingian psalter illustration, especially if the deer is antlered. While such classical influences may have been available to Pictish and Irish sculptors, the classicism of the deer and hound hunt was most likely derived via the artistic schools of the Carolingian renaissance. Contacts between Britain, both north and south, and the Carolingian milieu which was grounded on classical traditions were well-established by the 8th century.

It is necessary to consider another possible route of artistic influence. I. Henderson and Stevenson have both proposed a Mercian connection to the Pictish material. We can see that much of Pictish and Irish borrowing from the Mediterranean world may have been indirect, a view point already found in the work of Stevenson and Henderson.<sup>139</sup> Mercian analogies can be found (especially images including Davidic imagery) which point to Northumbria as a source for inspiration by the late 8th century, and beyond to the Carolingian empire and its links to the classical tradition of Rome and the East. This widening of contacts both in Pictland and Ireland, suggests that some of the same sources as Mercia were being drawn upon as well as indirectly through them.<sup>140</sup> Henderson points out that Iona had direct contact with Carolingian schools of art and iconography<sup>141</sup> and thus to its rich psalter and gospel illumination. Carolingian gospel and psalter art was

profoundly influenced by the mosaics, frescoes, paintings and manuscripts of Rome.

Mercian supremacy lasted roughly 100 years (720's to the 820's) having three powerful successive overlords; Aethelbald (716-57), Offa (757-96) and Coenwulf (796-821)<sup>142</sup> establishing a period when arts and patronage could flourish in relative security. Mercian manuscripts show Mediterranean and Eastern inspiration which pervades English art of the late 8th to 9th centuries, such as the *Barberini Gospels* and sculpture as at Breedon-on-the-Hill.<sup>143</sup> Carolingian influence appears in the early 9th century in Mercian manuscripts (ie. *Book of Cerne*) probably produced at Lichfield or Worcester, Carolingian court school books probably served as models for manuscripts like the *Book of Cerne* and the *Royal Bible* from Canterbury.<sup>144</sup> That the chase in both Pictland and Ireland, is reduced to a limited number of basic types suggests that certain workshops confined themselves to specific visual and literary sources.

The chase occurs upon Northumbrian sculpture<sup>though not</sup> until the 10th century and later. However, these monuments are different in composition and style and some examples show Viking influence. For completeness sake, we thought it best to mention Northumbrian examples of chase motifs. Hunters and archers appear as part of vine-scroll decoration, as at Hexham, Jarrow and Auckland St. Andrew (late 8th century), reflecting classical models and may be interpreted allegorically.<sup>145</sup> They are certainly distinct from the Pictish chase motifs with horsemen, and those with armed men or deer and hound themes in the Northumbrian sculpture of the post-Viking period.

On Auckland St. Andrew, Co. Durham (late 8th century or early 9th century), an archer framed by vine-scroll aims at birds above him and is accompanied by hounds with collars round their necks contained in volutes of the same scroll.<sup>146</sup> The hounds with collars and their body

patterning reflect Mercian taste<sup>147</sup> and may perhaps indicate the source from whence the Pictish sculptors of Meigle Nos.2 and 26 and Dull derived their collared hounds. Horses, hounds and stags seem to emerge in Northumbrian contexts most strongly in the Viking period<sup>148</sup> such as the Anglo-Scandinavian cross-shaft fragment Sockburn No.7 (Co.Durham), in which a man armed with a spear and sword is poised above a stag (third quarter of 10th century).<sup>149</sup>

The hart and hound motif occurs in Northumbrian sculpture, and like those on Manx sculpture seems to be linked with the Viking domination of these areas, as much as southern English influence. The hart and hound motif is found at Lancaster, Dacre, Heysham, Middleton, Elerburn and Kirk Leavington.<sup>150</sup> R.Cramp suggests that at Winston on Tees No.1, Co.Durham, a 10th or 11th century cross-head fragment, that a hart and hound motif may occur, the hound below one of the stags on either side of the cross forming the theme.<sup>151</sup> Only at Heysham and Middleton are the hart and hound part of a larger hunt scene, being depicted separately in all other Northumbrian examples. The Dacre cross-shaft as well as the other examples date from the 10th century. The Dacre version of the hart and hound is characteristic of Viking period renderings of chases known from earlier sculpture such as Pictish and Irish examples.<sup>152</sup> The hound leaps across the hart's back as it does at Kirk Leavington<sup>153</sup> and Lancaster.<sup>154</sup> The hound leaping across the hart's back is a feature also found in Pictish sculpture such as Burghead No.7.

However, these later Northumbrian examples differ in style to the Pictish and Irish examples. The antlers of the stags are palm or frond-like, the legs posed in a cross between a flying gallop and extended walk. Characteristic of later hart and hound groups as with the chase as a whole, the figures are more awkward than the Pictish or Irish examples. This degeneration of form is also found in the hunt as it appears in western Scotland of the same

period such as on the Govan sarcophagus or Manx examples, a response to Anglo-Scandinavian artistic influences which entered west Britain about this period.

The main difference between the earlier Pictish and Irish hunts and Northumbrian examples is that the hart and hound is treated as a distinct motif, unaccompanied by horsemen, men or other creatures in most Northumbrian examples. The incidence of the hart and hound group occurring separately from hunters in Pictish sculpture is infrequent, such as Meigle No.12, a Class III recumbent monument, likely of the late 9th or early 10th century (based on its form, lack of symbols and that the stag has antlers), the same period that the Northumbrian examples begin to appear. Bailey does point to a "trial-piece" from St. Blane's, Bute, carrying a hart and hound motif that may be of 8th or 9th century date, perhaps being a prefatory sketch for a larger hunt scene.<sup>155</sup> The hart and hound only appears as part of a hunt with human hunters in Irish cross sculpture.

Whereas the chase in Christian iconography can symbolise victory - victory over death or Christ's victory over the soul. In a secular connotation the hunt is also an image of triumph and victory. The image of triumph in religious and secular iconography acts as a link between the two. The hunting of the 'king' of animals, the stag or the lion, signifies triumph, imagined or real of the royal potentate portrayed in such images. The stag, pursued by kings or ambitious aristocracy, is a king of beasts to be considered worthy to be both an allegory for Christ and for the virtues of a worldly king. The chase is one way of establishing man's place under God in the terrestrial world and in Paradise. That these ideas appealed to the Insular Celtic milieu is demonstrated well in a passage from an early Irish text, the *Auraicept na n-Éces*, in which a worldly king from the Old Testament, Nimrod, is described as a good ruler and hunter (see Part Two - Chapter 2.).

This establishes an awareness of the chase as a divine symbol and one of social and practical importance embedded in the consciousness of the Celtic peoples. The hunt had powerful connotations as an ancient way of life, necessary for day-to-day survival and as part of oral, literary and artistic traditions.



## Chapter 2.1 - The Art-Historical Context of the Equestrian Motif:

Ruler-imagery is a central concept to our discussion of the models and forms of the Pictish and Irish equestrian motifs. Like the Pictish and Irish chase motifs the equestrian motifs appear to be descended from late Roman tradition. The image of the triumphant ruler on horseback is likely the ultimate model behind the equestrian motif of the Early Medieval period. It took a similar form throughout the Insular and Continental world (ie. the Carolingian Empire).

We aim to show that the equestrian motif appears to be expression of ideals of kingship, particularly Christian kingship. For the reasons discussed in connection with the chase in Chapter 2, we shall first discuss the relevance of possible classical sources of artistic influence upon the Pictish and Irish equestrian motifs. This will be followed by a discussion of the possibility of contact via developed and contemporary versions of the equestrian motif. For example, Carolingian or Northumbrian equestrian motifs.

Horsemen appear singly, in groups and as part of chase compositions upon Pictish cross-slabs and Irish crosses. The equestrian motif, like that of the hunt, has a multi-layered iconography. That these horsemen are symbolic is emphasised by their proximity to the cross. Horsemen are often placed alongside or even inside the cross sculpted upon the primary side of a cross-slab (ie. Rossie Priory cross-slab). On Irish crosses, the equestrian figure is generally found upon the base as part of processions or hunts, or upon the cross-shaft.

The full-face portrait, with wavy hair and strong brow-line, of the emperor on horseback is a common motif found on Sassanian and Late Antique silver plates. The emperor figure is often nimbed and diademed as a mark of his authority as seen on the Barberini diptych, Kertch dish and Belgrade cameo.<sup>1</sup> These riders are attired in short

kilts, mail and scale armour as are equestrian representations of Byzantine emperors and Roman cavalry tombstones.<sup>2</sup> Such attire is paralleled on the Franks Casket (c.700)<sup>3</sup> as well as on the later Class II cross-slab of Kirriemuir No.2 in Pictland. This emphasises the military aspect of the equestrian figure.

In form, the Pictish and Irish equestrian recall Carolingian equestrian representations which looked to Rome for artistic inspiration. They are ultimately of the oriental type of Late Antique or Byzantine models such as the Kertch dish.<sup>4</sup> Equestrians of the profile type most likely derive from representations of the Emperor Constantine. For example, a 9th century statuette<sup>^</sup> of Charlemagne or one of his successors. This figure presumably was based on the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, which was believed to represent Constantine in the Middle Ages. The equestrian statue of the Ostrogothic ruler Theodoric, that Charlemagne is believed to have brought to Aachen, was of this type had an artistic heritage in equestrian statuary such as that of Marcus Aurelius.<sup>5</sup>

The monumental tradition of the<sup>equestrian</sup> statue was adopted from the Near East by Rome for triumphal monuments as early as the 1st century.<sup>6</sup> The colossal free-standing equestrian figure of an emperor, usually with a defeated enemy under one of the horse's forelegs, was probably erected in public places. The statue of Marcus Aurelius positioned in front of the Lateran in the Middle Ages, was falsely believed to be Constantine and an equestrian figure of a slightly later emperor, possibly Septimius Severus, stood from about the 8th century in the piazza at Pavia.<sup>7</sup> Many equestrian figures were erected in Constantinople between the 4th and late 6th centuries. These Late Antique examples may have provided the influence for the triumphant equestrian developed by Western artists in places such as Pictland and Ireland. Such models were probably, like that for the chase

transmitted via contacts with a Carolingian court which was preoccupied with images of Christian kingship. The Pictish and Irish equine is generally depicted in a very similar pose to the triumphal mount.

These statues were well-known from travellers' reports of visits to Rome, such as Gregorius' *Marvels of Rome* and other descriptions of such marvels.<sup>8</sup> These marvellous equestrian statues obviously captivated the Early Medieval mind and as an appropriate symbol of Christian kingship, such an image may just as likely inspired the artist. Equestrian statues and other 'marvels' were taken note of and recorded from an early period, suggesting that models were available through literary description, perhaps sketches or even the descriptions of those returning from abroad to Britain.

The equestrian figure was a popular form of monument employed widely in the Hellenistic period of Greece for statues of Alexander. The equestrian statue was revived under the Roman Empire, such as the statue of Marcus Aurelius (c.164) commissioned to celebrate the emperor's possession of Armeniacus.<sup>9</sup> In the *Narracio de Mirabilibus Urbis Romae* (*Marvels of Rome*) (13th century, MS E IV 96, Library of St.Catherine's College, Cambridge) written by Magister Gregorius, many of the classical structures which still stood in the Middle Ages in Rome are described. The so-called equestrian statue of Constantine is documented in this Latin text.<sup>10</sup>

Gregorius describes the statue which stood at that time before the papal palace at the Lateran. It is first referred to in the *Liber Pontificalis* in the biographies of two 10th century pontiffs, John XIII (965-72) and John XIV (983-84).<sup>11</sup> It may have been there as early as the 8th century, when it prompted Charlemagne to import an equestrian bronze from Ravenna for his palace at Aachen as recorded by 9th century Ravenna historian, Agnellus in his *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis* and represented by

a bronze statuette of Charlemagne (Louvre, Paris).<sup>12</sup> Probably, the statue's connection with Constantine and his widespread fame as first Christian emperor (306-337) was a reason the statue and identification survived from Antiquity.<sup>13</sup>

However, even this type may be traced in form and symbolism to the ruler-images mentioned above, as they all express similar concepts of sovereignty and triumph as statements of power and wealth. The late classical models of the equestrian are of two main types: the emperor in battle and the welcome of the triumphant emperor called *adventus* (or *à l'anguipède*) images.<sup>14</sup> The victorious ruler is often accompanied by a winged victory and female personifications of provinces or cities.

The equestrian illustrates a prerogative of political power - the horse - in both Roman Imperial art and Medieval art. The Imperial triumphal model depicting the defeat of enemies or of mounted generals shown in a victorious pose or riding over subdued barbarians *à l'anguipède*, were adopted into the Christian repertoire to illustrate the aspect of victory. Examples, such as the "tondo" on the Arch of Constantine in Rome from the Hadrianic period (AD117-138) portraying a boar hunt, combines the military and triumphal aspects of a general on horseback involved in the chase on a monument that as a whole celebrates military and political victory.<sup>15</sup>

The base of Antonine Pius' column from the Antonine period (AD138-192) shows a procession of horsemen in attitudes of victory. The column was erected at Antonine Pius' death by his sons (d.161) and this processional frieze not only represents specific events but symbolic acts, such as the renewal of the *virtus* of the emperor, which was vital to the well-being of the State.<sup>16</sup> The horses in both the above examples rear up on their hind legs, forelegs lifted from the ground and necks arched in a pose common to such triumphal representations.

Pictish equestrians are infrequently represented in this rearing pose. There are examples on the cross-slabs of Aberlemno No.2, Rossie Priory and Shandwick. However, most Pictish and Irish horses are shown in a 'triumphal trot' more reminiscent of the horses of Late Imperial and Carolingian equestrian statuary and Carolingian equestrian representations in manuscript illumination. However, the equestrian images where the horse rears are important for our understanding of iconographical meanings and models.

The theme of victory is dominant in Roman official art such as on a relief panel of Marcus Aurelius (AD161-180) showing the emperor receiving defeated barbarians<sup>17</sup> mounted upon a horse in a triumphant pose reminiscent of that of Pictish and Irish equestrians. The horse paces forward, neck arched, one foreleg raised, the other on the ground. On this type of monument the emperor mounted on a horse is physically higher than the men on foot or the barbarians. In this manner he is placed above them both in status and in triumph. This is likely the symbolic purpose of equestrian figures in Pictish and Irish sculpture.

On the Kertch silver dish (4th century) a portrait of Constantius II (337-61) shows the mounted emperor nimbed, diademed, in royal military dress and holding a spear as his horse tramples a shield of a vanquished foe.<sup>18</sup> He is accompanied by a winged victory and holds a shield emblazoned with the *Chi-Rho*. The nimbus, diadem and royal dress serve to indicate the imperial subject of the plate.<sup>19</sup> The triumphal entry of the emperor with the Nike (goddess of victory) offering a victory wreath and holding the sign of victory, the palm branch is depicted on the Kertch dish

<sup>20</sup> The shield, <sup>which is carried by a foot-soldier,</sup> under the horse's hooves signifies the vanquished enemy and on the emperor's shield is the monogram of Christ.<sup>21</sup> Victory and sovereignty are here connected with the victory of Christ, as indicated by the triumphant emperor's shield. The Barberini diptych (late



5th or 6th century) depicts a Byzantine emperor riding in triumph over a female captive with a victory hovering above. The horse in these examples is in a rearing or leaping pose, the rider's leg falling behind its forelegs.

Horses and riders posed in a similar way are paralleled in Pictish sculpture such as the Kirriemuir No.2, Aberlemno No.2, and Rossie Priory cross-slabs. On the Pictish cross-slabs of Meigle Nos.1 and 2, the foremost equestrian is accompanied by a winged figure. It is often interpreted as an angel, but may also be regarded as a winged victory. Imperial horsemen usually carry a lance. Similarly, Pictish and Irish horsemen often carry spears.

As Hicks notes, "Roman horses have the high-stepping further front leg characteristic of...many Class II horses."<sup>22</sup>

*Adventus* and triumphal scenes, in their general presentation of the equestrian ruler, provide a source from which the Insular sculptor may have drawn inspiration, whether directly or from models ultimately inspired by these images. M.Biddle suggests that the *adventus* theme occurring on 4th century Roman coins, cameos, ivory and small carvings, silks and silver bowls were easily transported and reached England throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, perhaps being preserved in royal treasuries and monasteries where they were available as models to artists.<sup>23</sup>

The triumphal equestrian à *l'anguipède* was adopted into the Gallo-Roman repertoire and <sup>is</sup> found in Gaulish contexts such as an example at Luxeuil and a piece in the Museum of Wiesbaden.<sup>24</sup> The Gauls were exposed to Roman artistic traditions through serving as auxiliaries with the Roman legions or coming into contact with the legionary fortresses along the *limes* of the Rhine from the first half of the 3rd century.<sup>25</sup> The figure of the knight-cavalier<sup>26</sup> or *l'anguipède* became imposed upon their own triumphal images. The equestrian knight-cavalier of Greco-Roman



tradition usually has a funerary character, depicting a warrior astride a horse with one foreleg raised. In many Gallo-Roman examples, the *à l'anguipède* type of monument depicts a divinity or warrior astride a galloping horse supported by an elemental deity or trampling an enemy. These examples serve to illuminate the military aspects of the equestrian and horse - the horseman and equine as symbols of military might and victory. It was not difficult for a union of Celtic equestrian motifs with Christian equestrian imagery to take place when both iconographical interpretations came from the same origins.

Equestrian representations from Roman Britain provide a formally possible source for the Insular equestrian image. At the very least it establishes a tradition of the equestrian image in Britain, suggesting that its attendant symbolism and image were familiar from an early period. This tradition was likely strengthened when the equestrian was reintroduced as an appropriate image of Christian kingship in the Early Medieval period. The pre-Christian Celts also had a fine tradition of equine images in their artistic repertoire. The horseman however, seems to have been an image established under Roman intervention such as the Romano-Gaulish sculptures of the "rider god" equivalent to Jupiter.<sup>27</sup> These equestrians are often connected with funerary concepts and symbolism as are their classical counterparts.

Examples from Roman Britain include stone tomb reliefs for auxiliary cavalrymen showing the horseman riding over an enemy as at Stanwix, Cumberland;<sup>28</sup> Hexham Abbey of Flavinus (second quarter of 2AD);<sup>29</sup> and Cirencester, Gloucestershire (for Sextus Valerius Geniaus).<sup>30</sup> A cavalry tombstone from Colchester depicts the rider mounted on a horse in triumphal pose, one foreleg pawing the air and other legs on the ground.<sup>31</sup> Pictish and Irish horses usually have one foreleg raised but move forward rather than standing.

Roman British small votive bronze equestrian figures have been found. These are in a similar pose to the colossal statues mentioned above. The horse and rider are depicted in a triumphal pose, the rider as a warrior. Examples come from Canterbury, Brigstock in Northants;<sup>32</sup> and Willingham <sup>Cambs.</sup> Fen,<sup>33</sup> However, as Biddle points out, especially the cavalry tombstones belong to the 1st or early 2nd century and few are likely to have been standing in our period.<sup>34</sup> Closer to the Pictish territories, Roman distance slabs from the Antonine Wall may have survived in the landscape influencing the form, content, and design of Pictish sculpture.<sup>35</sup> A cavalryman in profile rides down a native warrior on the left hand side-panel of the Bridgeness distance slab<sup>36</sup> (the Antonine Wall was built in AD 142). A horseman riding over a fallen enemy is found at a later date (c.700) on the Sutton Hoo helmet.<sup>37</sup>

The Imperial triumphal model showing the equestrian *adventus* or *à l'anguipède* influenced Early Medieval art throughout the West, such as the mosaic in S.Maria Maggiore, Rome, in which Abraham astride a horse, like a Roman emperor or general, meets Melchizedek who is on foot.<sup>38</sup> Here is an explicit statement of relative status -

Abraham mounted triumphantly is placed in a higher plane than Melchizedek, who on foot is placed in a servile position. We also find such distinctions in status in Pictish equestrian and hunt compositions through relative size of the horsemen, contrast between those on foot and those mounted, as well as positioning of the predominant horseman at the top of the scene.

The union of Christian symbols such as the cross or motifs of God's Help (ie. *Daniel in the Lions' Den*) with the more ambivalent equestrian image on Pictish and Irish sculpture can be accepted, as the motif was already an established part of the Early Medieval iconographic repertoire. Originally, the equestrian motif was a non-Christian image connected with political and military

victory and was adapted for its triumphal symbolism as a potent Christian image.

More immediate sources of models which are successors to this classical tradition are found in Carolingian and Merovingian artwork. These are roughly contemporary to the period when horsemen begin to appear in Pictish and Irish art. The Carolingian equestrian was a symbol of kingship derived from the triumphal emperor and military model of late Rome such as the equestrian statue or ruler-images on silver dishes. The Carolingians enormously and permanently enhanced the significance and range of the visualisation of kingship in the West<sup>39</sup> reflecting Roman and Byzantine Imperial images and ideals. The motif of an equestrian, armed with a lance is found on pierced bronze discs discovered frequently in Frankish graves such as a gold disc-brooch from Pliezhausen.<sup>40</sup>

These motifs are thought to have been inspired by the equestrian saint image common in the Christian East.<sup>41</sup> Harbison states that figures of single horsemen upon Irish high crosses especially when represented holding a crozier (ie. Banagher) may owe their origin to mounted 'Coptic' saints found in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>42</sup> However, the equestrian saint images of St. Michael the Archangel, St. Theodore or St. George owe much to the same late Imperial representations as the mounted warrior overcoming a fallen enemy.<sup>43</sup>

The image of Constantine was a powerful one in the ideal of Carolingian kingship symbolising the first Christian ruler of the Empire, linking Christianity and sovereignty over the Roman world.<sup>44</sup> Tradition holds that Charlemagne tried to commission a great equestrian statue himself. Charlemagne and his successors saw their empire as the legitimate successor to the Roman Empire. In the 9th century Christian Carolingian Empire, only those Roman emperors who were Christians could be legitimate forerunners for a medieval Christian ruler. The frescoes of

Ingelheim Palace (c.820) depict the two Christian Roman emperors most often invoked by the Carolingians, Constantine and Theodosius.<sup>45</sup> Horsemen are often part of the illustrations in Carolingian manuscripts.

The triumphant equestrian is a symbol of imperial and Christian sovereignty. The horse is posed in a triumphal attitude -neck arched, one foreleg raised, the other on the ground, one hind leg raised and the other on the ground moving forward at a stately walk. This is the pose that Pictish and Irish horses generally appear in, and may have been a result of the classicising influences found in manuscripts of this period and sculpture such as St.Andrew's sarcophagus and Nigg. We can see how from an early period, the equestrian became associated with the symbolism of sovereignty, triumph and political and military power.

Identification with ideal rulers such as Constantine, made the motif a potent icon. One may also consider the occurrence of the name Constantine in Pictish king lists and Irish annals as a significant choice for a ruler's name. The equestrian was introduced into Pictish and Irish art in its triumphal style, already bearing a pedigree harking back to the most esteemed Christian and non-Christian rulers.

The Pictish and Irish equestrian share similar models. For example, the most classicising Pictish sculpture of the St.Andrews sarcophagus depicts David on horseback as part of a larger iconographic programme. The St.Andrews horseman has the wavy hair, close-cut to the face and strong hairline on the brow of the ruler-images of the Late Antique period such as the Barberini diptych. However, on Pictish and Irish examples, the rider usually has long hair, while the Imperial emperor has short. The long hair may be a result of native preference. The St.Andrews rider, like many Pictish horsemen, is bearded as is the emperor of the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius. Pictish and Irish

horsemen generally share in this preference for a strong hairline over the brow and bearded countenance.

The wavy or curly hair of many classical ruler-images is also found at Kirriemuir, Dupplin and Forteviot No.4. This is interesting as Dupplin and Forteviot may be from the period associated with the ascendancy of Kenneth Mac Alpin and his descendants with the royal centres of Forteviot and Dunkeld. The moustaches of the latter two riders and those at Benvie while paralleled in Irish sculpture and manuscripts are also found on the equestrian statue of Charlemagne. A beard and/or moustache suggests the maturity of the rider and his position of societal responsibility. Such models would be appropriate to an image of David, a biblical figure considered to be one of the models of Christian kingship like Constantine. The horses are also of a similar type, depicted in a triumphal pose, moving forward with one foreleg raised or in a rearing pose, necks arched and with the same elegant form.

The manuscript tradition offers parallels and a more portable fashion of disseminating visual ideas. The equestrian appears extremely rarely in Insular Celtic manuscripts, occurring more often in Carolingian and English manuscripts. The *Book of Kells* (8th or early 9thC) has two equestrian portraits as part of its incidental decoration. The most well-known is the horseman on fol.89r<sup>46</sup> and another similar rider on fol.255v.<sup>47</sup> The latter rider is a cleric, a status indicated by his tonsure.

The Kells riders are very like Pictish horsemen, riding in the same pose in profile and attired similarly in tunic, breeches, and cloak. The horses are of the same general type as the Pictish equine, however the leg action is different, (the horse on fol.89r simply walking; that on fol.255v legs interlaced to fit it in between the lines of text) and their features awkward suggesting that the Pictish horseman may have served as a model for the



manuscript illuminator. Edwards describes the fol.89r equestrian as a "more extreme version."<sup>48</sup> The rider is far too low to be sitting on the horse's back, gripping a rein without a bridle, and the lifted foreleg of the horse is bent up at the knee in the wrong direction and the hindlegs are intertwined decoratively to fit into the limited space available<sup>49</sup> much like the later "declined" series of Pictish horsemen.

These features are also typical of Irish equestrians, suggesting that perhaps the Pictish equine served as a model. The poses of the rider and horse and their features suggests that the illuminator may have been inspired ultimately by a similar source to Pictish horsemen. The horsemen are most similar to the Irish equestrian which are stylised like their Pictish counterparts. Like the hunt motif, the equestrian in Ireland and Pictland has parallels from the Continent such as Carolingian manuscripts which ultimately derived from Italian sources.

The *Cotton Genesis* cycle preserves images and a context of usage for the equestrian in Early Medieval art. The mosaic cycle in the narthex of S.Marco in Venice, is derived from the now much damaged *Cotton Genesis*. In the scene of Abraham's Return to Egypt and Abraham and Lot, the three main protagonists are all mounted.<sup>50</sup> The same scene is distributed over two miniatures in the *Cotton Genesis* (fol.19r, Abraham's Return to Egypt; and fol.19v, Lot proceeded by lancebearers).<sup>51</sup> The horses are of a similar type to those found in Pictish and Irish sculpture, and to those gracing the *Utrecht Psalter* - long slender legs, small hooves, arched neck, long tail and elegant head with rounded forehead tapering into the muzzle, dished profile. These horses move at the stately gait of the triumphal equestrians of Imperial art. This suggests that the equestrian motif was an accepted and recognised Christian symbol.

The *Utrecht Psalter* provides a possible disseminator



of equestrian images derived from late classical and Imperial tradition. The equestrian image appears frequently as a part of the illustrations accompanying psalmic text. For example, fol.43v, Psalm 75 (76) three horsemen travel to the left, one leading and the other two following, one just seen behind the other.<sup>52</sup> An angel flies like a Victory above the first horseman and two appear above his companions. Similar scenes occur in Pictish sculpture on Meigle Nos.1 and 2, where the riders are accompanied by a winged Victory or angel. On Meigle No.1 the horsemen are arranged one behind the other, while on Meigle No.2, the most similar to *Utrecht* fol.43v, the leading rider is accompanied by an angel or Victory and followed by two riders overlapping one another (the two riders are placed below the lead rider, due to the shape of the monument and as a statement of status). Also similar in conception to *Utrecht* fol.43v is Meigle No.26, though lacking the 'angel', a single rider fronts three others which overlap.

Many of the horses in the *Utrecht Psalter* are posed in a similar stylised fashion to Pictish and Irish horses in a triumphal 'trot' or 'walk'. The legs are in the wrong position in the Psalter examples, both the far foreleg and far hindlegs lifted off the ground. However, they share the common features of dished profile, elegant heads with high carriage and arched necks (some have short tails like Pictish examples at Meigle) with the Pictish and Irish horses. The riders are often attired in knee-length tunics, breeches or hose and cloaks similar to Pictish and Irish horsemen, as well as boots. However, they ride in a different position, leg behind the horse's forelegs as do the horsemen of classical tradition.

Equestrian figures also accompany Psalm 13(14) on fol.7v of the *Utrecht Psalter*.<sup>53</sup> Here the horses are equipped with saddles, bridles, reins, breast-strap and crupper while their warrior riders are armed with spears. Many of later Class II and Class III Pictish equestrians

are distinguished by attention to tack detail such as Benvie, St.Andrews and St.Madoes (one horse has a crupper here). Whether or not the *Utrecht Psalter* itself offered models for the equestrian and hunt motif to Pictish and Irish sculptors, the court school at Reims would have offered models upon which the Psalter was based, as well as models derived from the classical traditions of Rome.

Pictish and Irish sculpture offers the largest corpus of the equestrian in stone in an Insular context. Later examples dating from the 10th century and heavily influenced by Viking traditions of sculpture are found on the Isle of Man cross-slabs. The West coast of Scotland also has late examples of the equestrian in stone, bearing English, Viking and Pictish influences such as the Strathclyde sculpture of Govan Nos.4 and 5 (about 10th century), Barochan, Mountblow, Jordanhill and Canna No.1.

The Northumbrian equestrians of the 9th and 10th centuries are a result of the same classical and Carolingian impulses as the Pictish and Irish equestrian. Examples also appear in Mercian contexts, such as Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leics. A frieze of equestrian figures makes up part of the architectural sculpture at the church of St.Mary and St.Hardulph. These sculpted friezes and relief panels are generally accepted to be of Anglo-Saxon origin and are attributed to the beginning of the 9th century showing Eastern Christian and Carolingian influences.<sup>54</sup> A panel of paired equestrians in inhabited vine scroll is placed over the north arcade of the church. The riders bear spears or lances and bows, the horses on the right move at a 'trot' and on the left the horses are in a flying gallop appearing to leap over the volutes they straddle.<sup>55</sup>

Late Antique parallels can be found for these horsemen such as a tapestry panel from Egypt, where the posture of the horse, figure style, and way the spear is held at Breedon is paralleled.<sup>56</sup> The equestrian armed with a spear is a common motif in Merovingian art. An early 7th century

bronze plaque from a Lombardic shield (Berne, Historisches Museum) is a good example.<sup>57</sup> The illustration of an Arab horseman in the *Corbie Psalter* accompanying Psalm 32, fol.26b is a close parallel, nearer in date to Breedon.<sup>58</sup>

The Breedon horses are of a similar type to Pictish and Irish horses with the same high-stepping triumphal gait or rearing pose, fine legs, elegant heads, arched necks and long tails. However, the torso is too narrow proportionately, shoulders heavy and massive and leg action misunderstood with the 'trotting' horses, the far fore and hindlegs both lifted (instead of the opposite legs on a diagonal). The horsemen ride with their legs well behind their mounts' forelegs, bent at the knees similar to the portrayal of the equestrian on late classical sources such as silver plates.

Mercian, Pictish and Irish equestrians seem to share the same models or influences, Mercia perhaps being a region from whence such impulses reached Pictland and Ireland. Mercian sculpture does not appear until after the mid-8th century or, the end of Offa's reign (757-796),<sup>59</sup> roughly the same period when the equestrian and chase motif began to be used on Early Medieval sculpture in Pictish and Irish contexts. This suggests that throughout the Insular milieu, the same sources and models were being taken artistic advantage of, influence passing from the Continent.

Whether Anglian sculpture derived influence from Pictish equine prototypes, or later Pictish horses and their decline were contributed to by Anglo-Scandinavian influence, is difficult to deduce. Similar horsemen (long tunics, high-backed saddles and spurs) are seen on the West Scottish Govan Nos.4 and 5 (10th century, Lanarkshire). Horsemen armed with spears and sitting on high-backed saddles appear on the Sockburn No.14 hogback (late 9th to mid 10th century).<sup>60</sup>

Also located in Co.Durham and Anglo-Scandinavian is

the Gainford No.4 cross-shaft (first half 10th century).<sup>61</sup> A horseman in profile with his hair in a pony-tail and armed with a spear rides to the left. A similar equestrian figure, the rider also with a pony-tail carrying a round shield with central boss and moves to left, is the Chester-Le-Street No.1 cross-shaft (Co.Durham, late 9th century or early 10th century).<sup>62</sup> Cramp suggests that the horse and rider with pony-tail seem to be a Scandinavian motif, distinctively found on Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture, also appearing on Hart No.1, and Sockburn No.3.<sup>63</sup> These examples represent a combination of Anglian traditions and newer Scandinavian motifs. However, there is a precedent for profile horsemen with pony-tails in Pictish sculpture. Horses moving at a 'walk' all four legs on the ground are also found in late Pictish contexts, such as Dupplin. Class III Pictish horses may show Anglian influence.

An earlier Mercian example is the Repton equestrian which is of a similar type. Biddle suggests that it reflects Late Antique art and ideas, Celtic style, Germanic and ecclesiastical influences that would be present in 8th century Mercia and identifies the rider with a king of Mercia, Aethelbald (buried at Repton in 751).<sup>64</sup> The rider's countenance faces the viewer frontally, while his torso turns at a 3/4 profile much like the ruler-image riders on Late Antique silver plates such as the Kertch dish or the Barberini diptych. He has a long drooping moustache, a feature found on later Pictish horsemen as at Dupplin, on Irish sculpture (ie.Cross of Muiredach), and the Anglo-Scandinavian examples mentioned above. This feature is also found on the figure of the equestrian statue of Charlemagne, suggesting that it had become a general Hiberno-Saxon feature, also seen on figures in the *Book of Kells*.

There is also great attention shown to the detail of the horse's trappings, a feature characteristic of late Class II and Class III Pictish equestrians such as

Kirriemuir No.2 and St.Madoes. The bit, bridle (browband, noseband, cheek-piece and throat-latch), breast strap, crupper and high-fronted saddle attire the Repton horse. The rein also has a ring at its middle. Such rings as a feature of the rein are also found on Pictish examples such as the St.Andrews sarcophagus, Benvie and Inchbrayock No.1 and the Govan sarcophagus. The ring appears at the point midway between the bit and the rider's arm on Pictish examples rather than midway along the reins' length as at Repton.

If the Repton horseman dates from the mid 8th century,<sup>65</sup> this suggests that Pictish and Irish sculptors were receiving influence or even models from Mercian and Anglian sources and shared in a common tradition derived from classical art. This suggests a complex network of artistic influence and exchange, each region apparently interdependent on the artistic developments and incoming influences of the other. Models and influences did not just travel one way, but circulated throughout the Early Medieval period in Britain, as common motifs were often chosen to express specific Christian and secular iconographies. In other words, the development of the equestrian throughout Britain was a hybrid of models and influences characteristic of Insular art of that period.

The equestrian as a symbol of victory is associated with the Cross. The Cross when it is not part of a crucifixion scene, is a sacred monogram. In this context, it is a potent sign of victory and salvation, a symbol of the cosmic dominion of God and Christ and the emblem of the effectual sacrifice of the eternal Christ.<sup>66</sup> It was to this representation of the Cross that the equestrian became attached.

The horse alone or represented with the palm was a symbol of the final triumph in Early Medieval art. A Late Antique silver plate depicts hunters who feast under an awning, below them appear a groom leading a horse from an



elaborate stable.<sup>67</sup> The horse has two palm branches at its rear flank - a symbol of victory. Horses are also found in association with the palm in North African mosaics such as the Maison d'Ariane, Carthage (early 4th century) in which two horses are confronted across a pillar from the top of which springs a palm.<sup>68</sup> The horse is a possession of the wealthy and a mark of victory and wealth - of success and of someone who could afford to commission a major work of art, a mosaic. The horse whether ridden or not then, was a manifestation of the ideals of joy and victory.<sup>69</sup>

The chthonic connotations of the equestrian and horse in Greco-Roman art, such as Greek funeral steles showing the deceased astride a charger in a triumphal attitude, is a likely tradition behind this Christian symbolism. The deceased is depicted as triumphant even in death. In Christian symbolism of the equestrian, joy, struggle and triumph are the three ideas which are inseparable from this symbol.<sup>70</sup> The horse on its own has Christian import. An epitaph found at Sardaigne at Tharros, identifies the horse as the servant of Christ and a mark of Christianity (*mandatis serviens vitae omnibus Christi*).<sup>71</sup> Another aspect of the symbolism of the horse is as the servant of the Church fathers. Saint Augustine for whom the horse lifted its head in an expression of pride; and Saint Gregory who discovered that the Scriptures represent the horse as symbolising luxury, pride, society, good intentions and good preachers.<sup>72</sup> This symbol of the horse as the saint's servant is a common motif found in early Irish and Welsh saints' lives. Upon Pictish and Irish sculpture there also appear processions of unarmed horsemen who may well represent clerics or saints.

The horse is also mentioned in the *Bern Physiologus* in a chapter which is likely from Isidore's *Etymologiae* (Bk.12.1.42-48) and certain phrases are taken from Ambrose's *Hexaemeron*.<sup>73</sup> The horse is described as being high-spirited, having the ability to scent war, stirred by



the sound of the trumpet for battle and aroused by an excited voice in racing. They are grieved when defeated, exalted in victory and certain of them recognise the enemy in battle and will attack by biting. Certain steeds will only allow their master to ride them and will shed tears when their masters are slain or dying and men can infer the outcome of a fight by their mount's sorrow or joy.

Isidore also adds a list of four qualities to be sought in a horse: Form, beauty, merit and colour.<sup>74</sup> The horse then as early as the 7th and 9th centuries carried qualities linked with war, victory and fidelity. As we shall see in Part two these qualities are part of equine imagery in early Irish and Welsh saga, myth and hagiography. Perhaps the Pictish and Irish artists and writers derived some of their understanding of the horse from texts like Isidore and a Latin version of the *Physiologus* similar to the Bern version.

We now return to the matter of the chase and the equestrian motifs in indigenous sources. There is no reason, theoretical or practical for assigning an exclusively religious meaning to these motifs as these monuments were as much secular creations. To have an effective alliance between the Church and the local Pictish rulers, a mutual approach was necessary.<sup>75</sup> The symbolic ambivalence that we propose for these motifs is a necessary factor if this is true. M.Schapiro suggests that during the pre-Christian period these motifs had, "some significance as marks of rank or as symbols of virile qualities."<sup>76</sup> The hunt was one of the primary activities exclusive to the aristocracy (as was owning and riding horses) in times of peace. A public depiction of hunting and riding perhaps being a statement of wealth, political power and military might.

As we have seen, hunting and riding were appropriate and immediately recognisable symbols of social standing; the horses, hounds and weapons a reflection of wealth and status of those pictured within the chase motif. The

hunting interest of the warrior class is visibly and publicly illustrated upon the cross-slabs and crosses of Pictland and Ireland; depicting the aristocracy engaged in a worldly pursuit, serving to justify the social order and the means of maintaining it.

On the basis proposed we could further hypothesise that the chase and the equestrian motifs reveal the presence of certain attitudes - religious and social - that governed the production of works of art. This includes the concern for order, preoccupation with the theme of contest and an acceptance of the established social structures which regulated and controlled the production and design of the monuments.

### Chapter 3 - Patronage:

Who or what parties commissioned the stone monuments upon which the hunt and the equestrian motifs occur in conjunction with recognised biblical imagery concerns us here. Images of the chase and the equestrian are stereotyped and stylised in Pictish and Irish contexts implying that these motifs were a controlled product of the system of patronage that made use of them. The monuments in general are of Christian character and a Christian period.

The religious and aristocratic elements of society in Pictland and Ireland were interconnected in a variety of ways, the most striking being the propensity for the senior office-holders of an Irish monastery to be related to the leading secular family of a particular area. The secular nobility of the era when the cross-slabs and crosses were erected, were Christian, granting land to foundations or using a particular church as its burial place to gain prestige through association with the saint of that foundation. The interaction of the ecclesiastical and secular spheres to produce works of art can be understood against this background, as can the choice of imagery that has a religious and secular symbolism, the hunt and the equestrian.

Who appears in these hunts and equestrian cavalcades and who is commemorated in general, such as heads of families and their retinues, the clergy or professional people (craftsmen) will probably never be known, if specific personages were indeed represented at all. The role played by the patrons and what part the exigencies of the theme portrayed and the manner in which the requirements of the patrons caused it to be treated played should be considered.<sup>1</sup> These problems involve the interaction of taste, artistic convention and the aims of the patrons.

Political divisions influence stylistic differences as political power creates a network of contacts, and patronage and in the period of the sculpture under

discussion, monastic houses with royal patronage created focal points of influence.<sup>2</sup> The authority of the Church was unified with that of the secular elite, the clergy being aristocrats whose interests were those of the dominant social group.<sup>3</sup> The hunt and equestrian images appearing on these monuments, are representative of material symbols of prestige, status and wealth.<sup>4</sup>

The sculpture of Pictland and Ireland illustrate each areas' response to an accumulation of influences. The choice of religious images is influenced by secular interest, the Christianised nobility also delighting in motifs which represented virile and noble pursuits.<sup>5</sup> The hunt and equestrian motifs depict how the powerful secular sector of society sought to present themselves to their contemporaries. In other words, these motifs are statements of power, both religious and secular. As scenes from everyday life of the royalty and nobility, they reinforce the social and political standing of the elite for whom these monuments were made,<sup>6</sup> as well as carrying religious symbolism. The hunt and equestrian images chosen by the patrons to appear on sculpture were internationally understood and acceptable Christian images, adapted to the cultural identity of the society in which they appeared.

Pictish and Irish sculpture was created through a cooperation of the cultural inspiration of the monastery with the aristocratic society that interacted with it.<sup>7</sup> The social standing of kings and nobles was reinforced by the patronising of public works of art, reminding all that saw the monuments of the wealth and power of the elite, especially through the use of images depicting activities exclusive to the elite, such as hunting, riding and warfare.

These images of worldly activity are linked with the supernatural through the alternative religious symbolism of these images and the monument as a whole, serving to justify the social order and its means of maintenance. Hunting and keeping horses was self-indulgent, expensive

and had to be justified. By linking the chase and equestrian with a Christian meaning and visual form upon sculpture, these activities would gain be legitimised. For example, the stag hunt, not only symbolised Christian victory, but perhaps victory over other claimants to dynastic power or enemies by a ruling Christianised dynasty.

The creation of sculpture using hunt and equestrian motifs corresponds with the period when kingships strengthened nationally and locally in both Ireland and Scotland in the 8th and 9th centuries.<sup>8</sup> This was a period of dynastic struggles, consolidation and identity within the Celtic countries, at a time when links to the Church were also strengthening. Absolute power or high-kingship was highly unusual in Early Medieval Europe and sovereignty was not a concept which has much applicability to this period.<sup>9</sup>

However, ideas of sovereignty and national identity were entertained in early literary tradition in 9thC texts such as the *Historia Brittonum* which uses the word *monarchia* for Roman imperial power with implications of universal authority<sup>10</sup> and in Irish origin traditions. Adomnán writes of Diarmait mac Cerbaill as being high-king of Ireland "ordained by God" in support of the dynastic claims of the Uí Néill to the high-kingship<sup>11</sup> and stresses the Christian character of Irish kingship.<sup>12</sup>

Patronage of sculpture and the choice of motifs to be used was inextricably bound up in the relationship of monastic and secular communities and their ruling elites. As Cramp suggests in reference to Northumbrian sculpture, there is no definite evidence for the circumstances under which the sculpture was initially produced nor under whose patronage. It seems clear that it flourished in ecclesiastical contexts.<sup>13</sup> Craftsmen and masons could be maintained in large monastic centres. A royal capital would inevitably be an artistic centre or attract artists for commissions as royal patronage would ensure that the most

skilful and innovative craftsmen were available.<sup>14</sup> This is suggested by the archaeological evidence of metalworking workshops at sites such as Navan in Ireland and Dunadd in Scotland.

In Ireland kings founded monasteries, made grants of land; abbots and abbesses were frequently of royal kin; and international contacts of the church facilitated trade and cultural exchange.<sup>15</sup> Close relations between the Church and king in Pictland are expressed in such incidents as Columba's encounter with Brude; Nechtan's correspondence with Ceolfrith and the establishment of a royal chapel at the royal centre of Forteviot.<sup>16</sup>

As we shall see, Pictish cross-slabs appear by distribution to be associated with seats of royal power or church sites whereas the distribution of Irish monuments is largely monastic. Pictish Class II hunt scenes are for the most part sited near power centres of the Pictish dynasties of Angus and Gowrie, to whom power had shifted during the 8th century in the beginning of English expansion in the south.<sup>17</sup> When power shifted south during the reign of Oengus (729?-761), the importance of the north is reflected in the Easter Ross school of sculpture and the continuing use of Burghead which also has fragments of sculpture.<sup>18</sup> The monuments of this area suggest monastic interaction with the secular milieu. Shrine fragments from Kinnedar and Burghead, the cross-slabs of Rosemarkie, Glenferness and Elgin imply that foundations existed in the Early Medieval period.

The Picts had established a unified kingship before any other British nation.<sup>19</sup> During the period between the mid 8th and early 9th century the Picts were politically outward looking.<sup>20</sup> Oengus annexed the Scottic kingdom of Dál Riata, fought against the Britons of Strathclyde, and at different times allied himself with Eadberht of Northumbria, Cuthred of Wessex and Aethelbald of Mercia.<sup>21</sup> A king with such wide contacts and power provides a suitable patron for monumental Christian sculpture.



Constantine (789?-820) and his brother Oengus (820-834) followed. This was a period of continuity in the ruling dynasty which could be conducive to patronage of monumental art works and relations between the Columban and Irish west,<sup>22</sup> the era many of the sculptures under discussion were created.

The union of the Picts and Scots under Kenneth Mac Alpin, coincided with the establishment of the Irish high-kingship under Máelsechnaill mac Máele Ruanaid in the mid-9th century.<sup>23</sup> As a result of the concentration of political power, social prestige and economic resources according to L.Alcock, the Pictish magnates were able "to concentrate high-status activities under their immediate control" such as metalworking and sculpture.<sup>24</sup> The unification of Dál Riata and Pictland by Mac Alpin, king of Dál Riata (reign 843-58), initiated a new power structure, and a shifting of power from west to east.<sup>25</sup> This shift was also manifest in the ecclesiastical sphere. Mac Alpin chose Dunkeld as his chief ecclesiastical centre.<sup>26</sup> Dunkeld as well as being a centre of secular power was a religious centre, enjoyed royal patronage,<sup>and</sup> was placed under the patronage of Columba.<sup>27</sup>

From the mid 9th century, the focus of secular and ecclesiastical power in Scotland moved eastward, especially due to Iona's ravaging by the Vikings. This period (mid 9th-10th century) coincides with the appearance of eastern Class III sculpture adorned with equestrian motifs and hunts such as Scoonie, Forteviot No.4, Dunkeld No.2 and the Dupplin Cross. These examples seem to be stylistically related, notably the type of horseman, hunt and stag.

Cultural and intellectual contacts between Iona, Scotland, Ireland and England were frequent. By the 8th century, the Christian church was securely established in Ireland and Pictland, possessing a wide network of contacts, power and wealth, some of that wealth would have been spent maintaining scriptoria and patronising the work of craftsmen.<sup>28</sup> It is within this milieu of sophisticated

monastic culture that the sculpture must surely be viewed, the artists drawing on motifs and themes widespread in the art and liturgy of Christendom.<sup>29</sup>

Iona before the Viking raids was in a position of influence having jurisdiction over its own lands, tenants and laws.<sup>30</sup> Iona had royal connections through its founder Columba. Columba was of royal status and of the powerful Irish dynasty, the Uí Néill. This facilitated his contact with the powerful on both sides of the Irish Sea and is responsible for establishment of foundations in Uí Néill Ireland and Dál Riata Scotland.<sup>31</sup> The successors to Columba in the abbacy of Iona were also linked by kinship to the saint and his kin.<sup>32</sup> For example, Adomnán, author of the *Vita Columbae*, belonged to a branch of Columba's dynastic kin.

In Northumbria a large number of monasteries founded under the Ionan mission were endowed from royal estates and ruled by royal kin for at least the first two to three generations.<sup>33</sup> The close involvement between ruling kin and monastic houses was a tradition brought to Northumbrian monasteries founded under the Iona mission. This tradition was likely an element of monasticism in Pictland which had strong links with Iona. This witnesses the powerful combination of ruler and ecclesiastic of the same dynasty, and the considerable influence they appear to have held.<sup>34</sup> This suggests that artistic production would have been orientated around the two dominant elements of society, the ecclesiastical and aristocratic.

The building of a new monastery at Kells with close links to Iona, has secular connections. Early Irish tradition identifies Kells (*Cenannas*) as a royal site, associated with Conn Cétchathach and Cormac mac Airt, but it is unclear whether its royal associations persisted into historical times.<sup>35</sup> Kells gained prominence during the 10th century, as a prosperous foundation attracting both native and Viking rulers by its wealth according to the annals<sup>36</sup> and maintaining links with Iona. That the founder

of the Columban federation was both a Uí Néill noble and churchman had important consequences for his monastic network ensuring the cooperation of Iona abbots and secular rulers of the same kin enhancing the position of the Columban church<sup>37</sup> and ensuring a source of patronage.

The great Irish monastic foundations that arose during the 6th and 7th centuries were associated with the saint who founded them (eg. Ciarán founded Clonmacnois; Columba-Derry, Durrow and Iona). During the mid-6th century Irish monastic foundations proliferated, larger centres being surrounded by a *paruchia*, a type of clientship of lesser churches who shared the same founding saint with the parent house or were affiliated with them.<sup>38</sup> This suggests why early Irish sculpture seems to group in regions near powerful monastic foundations like Clonmacnois or Kells and outlying churches.

A large monastery would have had the economic and political resources to create major works of art such as the high crosses. Early Irish foundations also had connections with the dynastic powers of their regions. A powerful dynastic group might allow a foundation within their patrimony by stipulating that the abbot be drawn from the family that had provided the land for its siting.<sup>39</sup>

By the 8th century, the Uí Néill dynasty and polity had emerged issuing in a period of dynastic consolidation<sup>40</sup>, the northern and southern branches sharing the kingship of Tara alternatively.<sup>41</sup> By the 9th century, the kingship of Tara was the most important in Ireland.<sup>42</sup> The Tara kingship sought ties with the ecclesiastical centre of Armagh, both being related through association with St. Patrick. It is in this atmosphere of dynastic and ecclesiastical consolidation that sculpture began to be erected.

In general crosses and cross-slabs probably served a variety of purposes. They may have marked memorable events, commemorated certain personages, marked boundaries, areas of sanctuary, recorded land grants, served as a focus for

prayer, preaching, religious assembly and penance.<sup>43</sup> Henderson believes that Pictish cross-slabs are "evidence for the assumption of control of the Church by the secular authorities."<sup>44</sup>

Irish high crosses and Pictish cross-slabs illustrating liturgical themes such as images related to the *commendatio animae*, may have served an instructive purpose, promising salvation.<sup>45</sup> As we shall see, the hunt image can be related to the liturgy through its baptismal and psalmic symbolism, and theme of salvation and deliverance. In Ireland many crosses were sited close to the boundaries of monastic enclosures. The crosses were often arranged in the manner suggested in the plan in the *Book of Mulling* at the cardinal points, north, south, east and west.<sup>46</sup>

Patronage also raises the problem of where these monuments were produced, particularly the existence of 'schools' of sculpture which may suggest chronological and stylistic divisions as well. As Cramp suggests, attribution to schools implies time/place divisions not linked with known individuals which are tentative when the sculpture is not datable by absolute or external means.<sup>47</sup> Even though something is known of the dates of the Christian foundations which produced such sculpture these are often too early to be relevant, suggesting only a *terminus post quem*.<sup>48</sup>

There is no evidence - archaeological or literary - that there were 'court' schools of sculptors.<sup>49</sup> The existence of schools of sculpture in Pictland or Ireland is only suggested by the occurrence of many pieces at one site or related with one site such as Meigle, Clonmacnois or Kells; and the stylistic links of monuments occurring within a particular region.

By the term 'school', I have adopted Steer and Bannerman's definition in West Highland Sculpture.<sup>50</sup> To them 'school' means nothing more than a body of craftsmen producing carvings of a distinctive style, whether working

together in one centre or itinerant. Schools of Pictish sculpture do not fall into mutually exclusive geographic areas.<sup>51</sup> The products from one school may turn up in the 'territory' of another, especially as these schools existed at different and often overlapping periods of time.<sup>52</sup>

The bulk of Class II Pictish stones are restricted to the eastern mainland of Scotland, those with hunt and equestrian motifs generally located in the south-east (Perth, Angus and adjacent areas). The earliest cross-slabs are located in the heart of southern Pictland, Angus and east Perthshire such as Aberlemno and Rossie Priory.<sup>53</sup> Into this "southern school" Stevenson places stylistically related monuments such as Meigle No.1 and Monifieth No.1 and stylistic successors at Woodray, Meigle No.5, Fowlis Wester and the collection at St.Vigeans.<sup>54</sup> This classification may be broken down into smaller schools perhaps centred on the monastic centres of Meigle and St.Vigeans, most of the monuments falling within the 8th-9th centuries. There are northern "outliers" such as Fordoun, its combination of relief and incision indicating that it is of the mid to late 8th century, belonging to a group of northern sculpture such as Papil, Brough of Birsay, Golspie and Ulbster.<sup>55</sup>

Another group or school of sculpture is located along the same coast of the north-west shore of the Moray Firth,<sup>56</sup> including Hilton of Cadboll, Tarbat, Shandwick and Nigg. These monuments share a wide decorative frame and rounded relief.<sup>57</sup> The Hilton of Cadboll and Nigg stones appear to be stylistically and iconographically related to the St.Andrews sarcophagus. Perhaps St.Andrews, itself near the coast, through ecclesiastical connections, exerted some influence or even sent sculptors north up the coast. The Hilton of Cadboll, Nigg and Shandwick cross-slabs are located in Ross and Cromarty, the "Easter Ross" school described by Henderson.<sup>58</sup> The monuments in Easter Ross suggest that this district supported at least one important ecclesiastical centre, perhaps at Tarbat, which has



fragments of a number of cross-slabs.<sup>59</sup> These monuments would have required the presence of powerful and wealthy patrons, whether ecclesiastical or secular,<sup>60</sup> around the early 9th century, just as the sculpture produced at Meigle, Aberlemno and adjacent areas would have.

St.Vigeans houses a collection of sculpture which was found in the graveyard or built into the walls of the church. This implies the existence there of an early church or monastery.<sup>61</sup> The probable existence of an ecclesiastical foundation or church devoted to St.Vigianus suggests that this could have been a centre of sculpture production perhaps attracting outside patronage from local ruling families, or sculptors from other centres to fulfil commissions of sculpture. The St.Vigeans monuments are very similar to those at Meigle in carving technique and subject matter, suggesting exchange of artistic influence, if not craftsman as well.

At Meigle an impressive collection of sculpture was found in the vicinity of the church. These sculptures imply that there was once a major church or monastery nearby and a school or workshop of sculptors connected with it. The overall Christian iconography, style and technique of the sculpture, and repetition of certain motifs emphasise this connection.

Sources beside the corpus of sculpture for Meigle's status as a monastic centre are very tenuous. There is a late reference to a memorial written by Thana, son of Dudabrach, around 840 in Meigle (Migdele) in the time of King Pherath, son of Bergeth.<sup>62</sup> It is possible that he was a scribe based in a monastery that may have been founded in the 8th century.<sup>63</sup> In a summary of a memorial by Oengus mac Fergus, king of the Picts (name of kings of the Picts who reigned respectively 731-61 and 822-34)<sup>64</sup> the statement referring to Thana occurs at the closing. King Ferat mac Batot, king of the Picts (839-~~742~~) belonged to the line of Gowrie,<sup>65</sup> and the importance of Meigle at this time is attested by the collection of sculpture there, which may



have received secular patronage from a royal house such as that of Gowrie.

The existence of a school centred on Meigle in the late 8th century or first half of the 9th century may be connected with the court of the kings of Gowrie, the house of Ferat, which figures so frequently at this date in the list of kings of the Picts.<sup>66</sup> The fortunes of the king and the church were closely bound in Pictland and a king with wide contacts and personal ambitions would provide an apt patron for ambitious Christian sculpture.

The long reign of Oengus would have established the security needed for patronage to occur. Tradition attributes<sup>66</sup> his reign the foundation of St. Andrews with its southern connections reflected in its sculpture, an event coinciding with a period at which new influences were felt in Pictish sculpture.<sup>67</sup> St. Andrews was an important site in regards to its monastic foundation and association with Pictish royalty. It was important as a religious and secular site connected with important royal centres such as Forteviot and Gowrie.

Forteviot is the last of the Pictish palaces of southern Pictland.<sup>68</sup> This area was briefly taken over by the descendants of Kenneth Mac Alpin before transferring to Scone. The earliest alleged event attributed to Forteviot is in the B version of the St. Andrews foundation legend (around 980) which relates that St. Regulus brought the relics of St. Andrew to Pictland and met the three sons of King Oengus at Forteviot.<sup>69</sup> A tenth part of Forteviot was dedicated to God and St. Andrew, a cross set up, and upon the king's return, he built a church.<sup>70</sup> According to the Pictish regnal lists D and F, Drust son of Ferat, having reigned three years was succeeded by Mac Alpin, who died in *palacio Fothiurtabaich*.<sup>71</sup> These references although not contemporary indicate a later (12th century) belief in the former importance of Forteviot as a royal centre.

There are also references in Irish annals and early literature to Fortriu. The Annals of Tigernach and Ulster

record the battle of Dunnichen in which <sup>king</sup>Æcgfrith, of Northumbria was killed by Brude, king of Fortriu, sa.685.<sup>72</sup> The deaths of the kings of Fortriu, Brude (ca.763) and Angus (ca.834) are also recorded in these annals.<sup>73</sup> The discovery of a sculptured arch and sculpted fragments suggest the existence of a royal church and centre. The Dupplin cross can be seen from the site of Forteviot and is related stylistically to the sculpture found at Forteviot itself.

Irish high crosses with hunt and equestrian images appear to be located in groups associated with monastic foundations, suggesting the existence of schools of sculpture. Most of these crosses are located in the western, midland and southern regions of Ireland. Many of the early chase bearing crosses are located at Clonmacnois and nearby areas such as Bealin and Banagher. The foundation of Durrow is also close to Clonmacnois. Another group of chase and equestrian bearing crosses are associated with Kells which is near to Dromiskin and Monasterboice. Ahenny in the south is near to Killamery, Kilkieran and Kilree, all sites of chase and equestrian bearing sculpture.

There appears to be stylistic relation between these groups as well as an overlap in different types of sculpture chronologically. Scripture type crosses are found at Clonmacnois, Durrow, Kells and Monasterboice suggesting artistic exchange of influence between these areas or travelling schools of sculptors. These monastic foundations were powerful, wealthy and well-connected with the major dynasties of their respective regions. The crosses associated with these foundations emphasising their role as artistic patrons as well as their economic and political power.

We can see the connection of an ecclesiastical site with royalty, not only in the lineage of monastic leaders as at Iona, but as a royal burial place. Wealth enabled the Church to become a dominant patron of sculpture and other

arts. To be a founder or benefactor of a church, bestowed upon kings and nobles the prestige of a public comment on their piety as well as wealth, a church perhaps serving as a centre where the memory of these benefactors and their dynasties were preserved (perhaps through records, burial and the patronage of sculpture on the site). The Church throughout Britain became wealthy through donation of land and treasure by pious kings and nobles. By the 10th century, ecclesiastical centres benefited from grants from local aristocracy in order to ensure their burial in holy ground such as Govan, Strathclyde.<sup>74</sup>

The connection of monastic foundations and churches to secular aristocracy would have been an important aspect in the network of patronage of sculpture and the ecclesiastical community as a whole. That cross-slabs and crosses were adorned with Christian motifs, some having an ambivalent meaning, like the hunt and equestrian suggest that some sort of compromise was reached by the patrons of this sculpture. The hunt and equestrian function as secular images of prestige in addition their Christian meanings, suggesting a mutual tolerance.

Patronage of ecclesiastical sculpture by secular nobility, as much as being a public display of wealth and power, was also public statement of piety. Prestige was not only to be gained through burial in holy ground or grants of land for religious purpose, but through the high profile of monumental sculpture within the grounds of a particular establishment or in the nearby area. Dynastic connections between rulers of monasteries and secular nobility, would enhance this cooperation in patronage of the expensive undertaking of producing sculpture and maintaining a workshop of sculptors and masons. The patronage of sculpture is a form of conspicuous exploitation of wealth and its manifestation.

It is in the dynastic interests of the ruling classes and monasteries they patronised to evoke a heroic national past through art, whether literature or sculpture.<sup>75</sup> A

triad from the *Dimetian Code* of the early Welsh laws of Hywel Dda (9thC?) expresses this concept well, "Three things which strengthen custom: respectability; power; and authority."<sup>76</sup>

#### Chapter 4 - Summary Statement:

The aim of Part One has been to show that the general homogeneity of the Pictish and the Irish hunt and equestrian motifs suggest that a limited number of artistic and iconographical models were available to the sculptors. It appears that specific examples would have been chosen for the iconographic messages they held. The heritage of the chase and the equestrian motifs lie ultimately in non-Christian art adapted to Christian usage, not only for ecclesiastical purposes but to express the status of a Christianised aristocracy. That there appears to be no real contradiction between the secular and religious meanings of these motifs supports our hypothesis of the ambivalent and multivalent nature of their symbolism.

The Christian and secular symbolisms of these motifs are linked by the shared themes of victory and sovereignty, protection and salvation. For example, the symbolism of victory and status implied by Roman mosaic hunts or the equestrian statues which became part of the Christian understanding of these motifs. Psalter imagery links the chase with the symbolism of baptism, regeneration and salvation.

The Pictish and Irish chase and equestrian motifs, as we have discussed, were likely based upon models from schools of classical Italianate influence within the Carolingian Empire, as at Rheims. These models were probably transmitted to Pictland and Ireland via the network of monastic contacts existing within and without Britain. The form and the symbolism of such models were already familiar to the Irish and the Picts through a rich native imagery of the hunt and the equestrian within Celtic literary traditions. In the following section, Part Two, we will discuss the importance of the Celtic literary traditions to further our understanding of the symbolism of the chase and the equestrian in Pictish and Irish sculpture.

## PART TWO - The Chase and Equestrian in Literary Sources:

### Chapter 1 - Introduction to Part Two:

In order to further our understanding of the chase and equestrian motifs of the sculptural art of Pictland and Ireland we need consider the rich native tradition of saga, hagiography, and legal tracts. These sources not only illuminate the practical aspects of hunting and riding, but the social importance of these highly ritualized and often ceremonial pastimes. Hunting and riding were a significant prerogative of the aristocratic class who were part of a Christianised society. The ambivalent nature of the symbolism of the chase and equestrian is apparent in the fact that symbolic importance is bestowed upon hunting and riding in stories in which these motifs appear largely in a secular sense. However, the same themes are shared with palpable Christian symbolism -salvation, sovereignty and victory.

The relation between visual representations and works of literature is as K.Weitzman writes "quite vague at the beginning, but as time goes on becomes closer until, in the final stage, the pictorial representation even adopts from literature a fundamental principle" such as progressive narration<sup>1</sup> or a theme. The chase as it appears upon Pictish and Irish sculpture represents only a single action, the most dramatic scene of the hunt, unified in time and place, with all the movements of the participants related to a precise moment.<sup>2</sup> The Pictish and Irish hunt is made up of independent iconographic units (ie. deer, equestrian) used to express the action represented.<sup>3</sup> The spectator is then able to follow the composition as a narrative which has iconographic coherence.

The redaction of literary sources into this chapter shares in the difficulty faced by any student using early Irish and Welsh sources for the purpose of analytic discussion. Early Irish tradition survives in 11th century or later in manuscripts of the Middle Irish period. Welsh material is likewise available to us today in manuscripts



written in the 12th century or later. Surviving early literary strata in both sources has been determined by scholars through linguistic and thematic analysis allowing us, cautiously, to study the early literary sources in order to further symbolic understanding of Pictish and Irish monuments.

The most perplexing problem confronting one when turning to early Celtic literary sources in order to aid in understanding the sculpture of the Picts is that no extant sources contain anything of this peoples' legends or sagas. However, that Pictish art shares elements characteristic of Celtic art suggests that their literature may have also shared similar aspects. The non-survival of Pictish literature and what it would have been like is a practical reason for the use of art and literature to illuminate one another.

The nature of Pictish literature will never be known with any certainty, but what clues there are suggest it would have been broadly comparable with contemporary Irish and Welsh literature in respect of themes, genres and even some characters. Interaction is suggested by the common shared literary dimension between Irish and Welsh tradition which conceives of Pictland as an amorphous extension of their own cultures. Early Irish and Welsh literary tradition saw Pictland as a slightly shadowy but by no means alien world adjoining their own territories. This literary interaction took place within the upper levels of society and in an ecclesiastical context. The use of Irish and Welsh sources to throw light upon aspects of the lost literature and culture of Pictland is problematic, but nevertheless potentially a valuable undertaking.

We have already referred to general reasons why art and literature can illuminate each other within a Medieval context and specifically, Celtic cultures. There are reasons for believing early Irish and Welsh literature to be relevant to the sculpture under discussion. Pictish and Irish monuments capture a key dramatic moment of the chase

having a close parallel to the literary motif as it appears in early Celtic sources. A relationship exists between visual and literary art forms as both are used to convey a message through symbols and have a repertory of aesthetically pleasing vignettes similar in conception having a standardised form.

Celtic literature is highly visual, an aspect of the orality so significant to the development of Celtic tradition. Irish literature especially has a love for visual description. Perhaps the appearance of chase and equestrian images associated with Christian themes and visual motifs in early Irish art and literature is part of an especial interest in the appearance of favourite Biblical characters and themes. D. Ó Cróinín points out that nowhere are there any descriptive accounts of either Christ or the apostles in the gospels or Acts of the Apostles, yet this was one of the favourite iconographical illustrations in Christian art.<sup>4</sup> The chase and equestrian may also be part of such a process.

Insular Celtic areas such as Ireland and Wales, share a common literary and artistic inheritance.<sup>5</sup> These literatures share interconnections and influences, in saga themes and hagiography where the same and similar motifs are used within the narrative. By tracing these common elements, one may suggest what themes, heroes, and stories may have existed at one time in Ireland, Wales, and Pictland.

Ireland, Wales and Pictland shared active contact historically such as the missionary activities of the Irish Church in Scotland and Irish settlement in Scotland and Wales. This encourages the speculation that the imperceptible shading over from ecclesiastical to literary experience may have had shared elements in Ireland and Pictland. Irrespective of borrowing and sharing there would have been genetically related common inheritance between Picts and other Northern British peoples - as between Welsh and Cornish and Bretons. That Pictland and Ireland are the

only Insular regions to develop a complex visual chase motif suggests that similar artistic if not literary sources were shared.

Certain themes and characters occur in both Welsh and Irish traditions which may hint at the lost strata of North British and Pictish material.<sup>6</sup> Characters from Pictland appear in the *Goddodin* and other literary forms indicating that to the Medieval Welsh and Irish mind, Pictland was an extension of their familiar culture. For example, Pictish characters appear in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, Irish annals, and the Welsh tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen*. Also, in Irish tradition, Scotland is mentioned in saga and hagiography in sources as diverse as *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* and *Vita Columbae*, showing that Scotland was considered to be within the same cultural and political sphere.

The small indications existing are that Pictish literature contained comparable sorts of origin legends and genealogy to Irish and Welsh.<sup>7</sup> There are similarities between Ireland and Wales such as inherited themes and characters; the chase of *Twrch Trwyth*, the wildman/madman such as *Suibhne Gelt*, *Cau of Prydyn* and Arthur, linked by the traditions of North Britain.<sup>8</sup> This indicates a Celtic inheritance which means we may project what Pictish literature may have been. The important link between literature and visual art was the Church, providing universal images and within Ireland, Wales, and Scotland recorded secular traditions of literature and patronised art.

It is through the tracing of these literary links based on themes and names occurring in Irish and Welsh tradition, that something of the content of legends of the Picts and south Scotland may be recovered as well as the breadth of literary interaction amongst the Celtic peoples. At the very least - and this is all we claim for present purposes - this gives reason for believing Irish and Welsh literature to be relevant to Pictland through literary inheritance of themes and interconnections. More

particularly, as is evident with the visual chase, influences on the symbolism of the literary hunt were likely also similar. The chase and equestrian are part of these traditions, with a theme and artistic function well known from a common literary tradition.

Ireland and the Picts shared an active contact through both the missionary impulse of the Irish church as well as the Irish settlement of Dál Riada and indeed of Pictland. It is likely that aspects of Irish sagas such as the Ulster Cycle, were adopted into or influenced any Pictish lore and may have been influenced by old British traditions themselves. Relations between Ireland and the Picts are suggested in the Irish origin legends of the Picts such as *Braflang Scóine* (The Treachery of Scone) and the elimination of the Pictish nobility by <sup>Kenneth</sup> Mac Alpine in the Medieval Irish Tale-lists.<sup>9</sup> The Picts and the internal workings of their kingdom were of interest to the Irish annal recorders suggesting that contact was maintained and thus some sort of cultural exchange.<sup>10</sup> The Medieval Irish *literati* saw Picts as part of the scheme of Gædelic life, just as *Cau of Prydyn* was seen by Aneirin as simply another North Briton.

We should consider the Picts as Celtic in language and social structure, having a hierarchical and warlike society and participating in a wide range of European technology and cultural traits like the Irish Celts.<sup>11</sup> According to Bede and Gildas the Picts were indistinguishable from other northwest European nations.<sup>12</sup>

R.Bromwich suggests that transmission of literary themes into Scotland and Britain may have occurred through the Irish settlement in Galloway (likely to have followed within a century or two of Irish settlement of Argyll in the late 5th century) from Ireland.<sup>13</sup> Themes such as the hunt and sovereignty motif may have been transmitted from Ireland into British Strathclyde and thence south to England and Wales.<sup>14</sup> It is entirely possible that literary themes may have been transmitted into the territory of the

Picts in a similar manner from Irish settlements in Galloway or Argyll.

The Irish also established settlements in south-west Wales in the late 4th to early 5th century and in the late 5th to early 6th centuries as well as north-west and mid-Wales, Cornwall and south-west Scotland.<sup>15</sup> There is common material in Welsh and Irish annals with notice of Welsh and Scottish events by Irish annalists.<sup>16</sup> As Bromwich suggests, perhaps one should think in terms of a "community of story themes and mythological formulas" held in common by the Celtic peoples rather than regarding Ireland as the primary source for the dissemination of such themes as the hunt and sovereignty motif throughout the Celtic world which present basic concepts of secular Celtic beliefs."<sup>17</sup> It is of the nature of such themes as sovereignty that they are almost definitionally part of the Celtic inheritance in the Celtic literatures.

Following in Chapters 2 and 3 we will discuss the representation of the chase and the equestrian motifs in early Celtic literary sources.

## Chapter 2 - The Chase in Early Celtic Literature:

The chase as well as being a source of visual religious and secular symbolism, is one of literary images. As its visual counterpart, the chase in early Celtic literary sources is often used as a motif to express the heroism of the hunter, especially the sovereign or boy-hero who hunts. The chase motif in early Irish and Welsh literary sources is generally of incidental nature, taking a place in the narrative foreground of the tale as a catalyst in the protagonist's career and significant part of his life. Early Irish and Welsh legal texts also illuminate the importance of the chase in these cultures.

The difficulty of such an image in art is whether it is based on historical or literary sources. It is argued here that both aspects contributed to the formation of a symbolism associated with the image of the chase, whether literary or visual. The image of the hero or saint is made clear through the choice of motifs connected with him.<sup>1</sup> We suggest that the chase motif enhances the saint or hero's prestige and displays their power. In both heroic and saint's biography the trial of the chase leads to a triumph.

The visual hunt motif is a form of representational art expressing certain ideas of iconographic importance. The chase motif of Pictish and Irish sculpture is remarkable having a symbolism found both in universal religious and more intimate native secular literary sources. The hunt motif is used as a dramatic device and is a significant part of early Irish and Welsh saga material, especially those legends connected with ideals of sovereignty and heroism, as it is in Christian symbolism.

As a whole, early Irish and Welsh literary sources contribute to our understanding of the secular importance attached to the image of the hunt. This secular symbolism, associated with ideals of kingship, heroism and victory, is complementary to the religious interpretation of the visual motif. However, while these legends may help us understand



the symbolism of the chase and its choice as a motif, we must beware of endeavouring to attach the visual chase to specific stories or heroes.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this is due to the unchristian aspects of what these hunters represented by living outside the pale of society and Church. The legendary material may only be used as a method to gain further insight into the iconographic understanding and importance of the chase in visual form.

The stereotyped form of the chase motif in sculpture and in literary tradition confirms that the importance of the image lies in the ideas expressed rather than as specific representations of legend. This ambivalence means that the chase can be understood in a multivalent religious and secular sense. Any identification with specific literary scenes is vague enough to suggest that it is the symbolism expressed by the motif that is important. The sculptural hunt is narrative only in the sense that the chase may be followed through its most dramatic moment. This is how the chase appears in literary sources as well, defined in the simplest terms possible, only the essential elements are included.

The chase is generally described in a similar fashion in each story. The earliest literary remains of the Celtic peoples were recorded in relatively late and Christianised versions which express older oral traditions. The visual hunt is an expression of a heroic phase during which the Celts emerged from primitive tribalism into an aristocratic society later consolidated in feudalism in which hereditary or national kingship and the *ephebia* (group of young warriors attached to royal war-chief) were important new institutions.<sup>3</sup> Early Celtic society is often defined as a heroic one in the sense that it is based upon a primitive or warrior aristocracy, organised for warfare<sup>4</sup> of which the hunt served as important preparation. Heroic literature is aristocratic in outlook, recognizing loyalty and prowess as virtues. It may be reasonably inferred that the general traits of a heroic age are retained in the literature.<sup>5</sup> It

may be this aspect that the sculpted chase recalls in the interests of aristocratic patrons.

The hunt motif in early Irish and Welsh literary sources is used in a similar manner as in other European literatures of the Middle Ages. The theme of the chase of a marvellous beast has wide currency in Welsh and Irish material being more than a simple reflection of the popularity of the sport.<sup>6</sup> The animals are supernatural or a human transformed. Heroes hunt on their way to battle or upon a journey. They hunt as a means of proving their rank and prowess, or as a way to prepare for war in peaceful times. A hunting expedition leads the hero into an adventure of otherworldly nature, initiating a phase of exceptional deeds of prowess.

As we shall see, in early Irish and Welsh legend the hunt motif has a basic form. A chase lures the hunter into an encounter with a divinity in which he gains a new identity and social responsibilities. The hunt acts as an initiation guiding the hero from a state of ignorance to one of knowledge. The chase occurs in a different form in hagiography but still functions as an introduction to a remarkable event. The chase motif's appearance and function within early Irish and Welsh tradition may be discussed as follows:

- i) Chase motif in Sovereignty Tales;
- ii) Chase motif in Fenian Legend;
- iii) Chase motif in Hagiography.

*i) Chase Motif in Sovereignty Tales:*

The hunt motif that has elicited the most interest is termed the "Transformed Sovereignty" motif by Rachel Bromwich.<sup>7</sup> She defines this as a tale beginning with a hunt leading to the hero's encounter with a hag who is actually the Transformed Sovereignty figure. The hag is transformed into a lovely maiden once the hero has agreed to lie with her and foretells his kingship.<sup>8</sup> The chase motif forms the prelude to a hero's crucial experience.<sup>9</sup> This "constitutes an adventure of magnitude or intensity", wherein the hero's involvement may elicit a sense of his identity or define

and alter his life.<sup>10</sup> The hunt motif introduces movement toward conflict initiated by a heroic contest between the hunter and magical quarry catalyst to an adventure or journey in which the hunter is impelled by his desire for the prey, and is governed by the rules of the chase to perform necessary rituals and overcome obstacles in the landscape.<sup>11</sup> All that occurs marks stages in the hero's progress towards a new identity.

This type of chase motif appears in its most basic form in the tales concerning Lugaid Laígde and Níall Noígíallach. A sense of national or local identity is reflected in these tales which form part of the corpus of kingship making tales, especially as kingships strengthened locally and nationally in Ireland of that period.<sup>12</sup>

The story of Lugaid Laígde appears in the *Cóir Anmann* and the Metrical Dindshenchas anecdote of *Carn Máil*. According to Whitley Stokes, the *Carn Máil* can hardly date before the 12th century. However, the episode involving Lugaid Laígde (#70) is of the 11th or 12th century as it occurs in the Metrical Dindshenchas (The Metrical Dindshenchas is attributed to the late 11th or 12th century.<sup>13</sup>

In the *Cóir Anmann* version, the fitness of the names of Dáire Doimthech's five sons is explained. Dáire bestows the name Lugaid upon each of his sons as it has been foretold that a son of his will obtain the sovereignty of Érin and that Lugaid would be his name. Dáire asks his druid which of his sons will become king and the druid tells him the boy who succeeds in catching a fawn of golden lustre to appear at a future assembly, will be king after Dáire. When the fawn appears at the assembly, the sons of Dáire set off in pursuit of it. A magical mist separates the Luguids from their hunting party and Lugaid Laígde slays the fawn. The Luguids hunt once again in the wilderness and a great snowfall forces them to seek shelter. They come upon a wonderful abode with a great fire, abundant food and ale, and a huge old woman. All the

Lugaids refuse her invitation to lie with her except for Lugaid Laígde. Upon this she is transformed into a beautiful young maiden, informs Lugaid that she is Sovereignty and that the kingship of all Érin will be obtained by him.<sup>14</sup>

The *Carn Máil* version of the tale from the Metrical Dindshenchas relates that Dáire has seven sons, all named Lugaid because of a prophecy foretelling that a son of his named Lugaid will one day be king. The young Lugaids catch the enchanted fawn and cast lots so each would know his share of the kill. As they are sitting about the fireside, a loathsome hag enters telling the youths that one of them must lie with her or she will devour them all. Lugaid Laígde who realises the danger and implications, complies with her request. The hag is then transformed into a beautiful maiden who tells Lugaid that she is the kingship of Alba and Érin.<sup>15</sup>

Níall Noígíallach son of Eochaid Muigmedón was king of Ireland from AD 379-405<sup>16</sup> and is recorded as having been slain in AD 405 in the *Annals of the Four Masters*.<sup>17</sup> The story itself cannot be older than the 11th century due to the mention of Brían Bóruma and Máelsechlainn mac Domnaill in the text.<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that the tale concerning Lugaid Laígde in the *Cóir Anmann* and Metrical Dindshenchas dates approximately to the same period of the 11th or 12th century.

The young Níall Noígíallach's selection by Sovereignty as king of Ireland is also introduced using the chase motif. The *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin* is similar to the Lugaid tale. The queen Mongfind, sends her sons to Sithchenn the druid-smith, displeased with his first judgement that Níall, her stepson, shall be the future king. Sithchenn bestows upon Níall the finest of the weapons he has crafted for the brothers and sends them hunting. He tells the youths to "go to hunt and try your arms."<sup>19</sup> The sons of Eochaid go astray in the forest and it closes against them. The youths stop to rest, kindle a

fire, and eat of their kill. Once again the chase provides the setting and introduction for a supernatural encounter to occur. The brothers discover that they are in need of water and one by one set off for a nearby well. Each youth in turn is met by a hag who will only allow the lad to draw water if he will kiss her. Only Níall consents to her demand and thereby the hag is transformed into a comely maiden, the personification of the Sovereignty goddess. She calls herself Sovereignty and prophesies Níall's imminent kingship.

The chase in these tales is linked with the Transformed Sovereignty motif. The hunt serves to indicate to the reader early on that Lugaid Laígde and Níall Noígíallach are superior to their brothers. Lugaid and Níall are immediately distinguished from their respective kindred even before the chase occurs in each story. The fates of Lugaid and Níall are initially foretold by a druid figure. Níall and his brothers are also encouraged to hunt in order to distinguish themselves by the druid responsible for their education. The druid, Sithchell also foretells Níall's imminent kingship and bestows upon him the best weapons he has fashioned for the hunt. Dáire hears a prophecy foretelling Lugaid Laígde's kingship.

In the *Cóir Anmann* it is Lugaid who fells the fawn and to whom the greatest share of the carcass falls giving him further heroic distinction. The other brothers must divide the carcass and prepare it for Lugaid Laígde. As Lugaid Laígde has killed the fawn he has the right to the kill as he has proved himself the superior hunter amongst brothers who were initially his equals. By accepting Sovereignty, Lugaid and Níall elevate their status formally. That Níall is the only brother to agree to Sovereignty's request comes as no surprise; Lugaid also shows this extra insight into the situation that his siblings lack. The hunt provides the setting for the hero's first feat of arms as a fitting test for a future ruler. Sovereignty must initially test her selected candidate at heroic worldly pursuits such as skill



at arms and intelligence, both requirements of the kingly pursuit of the chase. The qualities demonstrated through the medium of the hunt are those of a good and rightful king.

In both versions of the Lugaid tale, the chase is linked with a dynastic and sovereignty theme by the naming ceremonies. Each brother is accorded a distinguishing epithet according to their actions as hunters (before all the brothers had been named simply, Lugaid). Now their relative status is marked through the hunt and preparation of the carcass for a hunter's feast. The Metrical Dinshenchas version shows Lugaid Laigde as the equal of his siblings as lots are drawn for the dividing of the carcass and each seems to receive an equal share. Only when Laigde accepts Sovereignty after she has been rejected by the other Luguids does he elevate his status, from youth to adult, hunter to king.

In the *Cóir Anmann* and *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin*, prowess in hunting is a test for the future king before he meets Sovereignty in her human form. In a sense he must devour his birth right first in the form of the quarry. In both tales the hunt acts as a setting for the otherworldly adventure to begin. The forces of nature turn hostile in order to facilitate our heroes' crossing to the otherworld. The natural environment becomes unfriendly forcing the hero to lose his way. In this isolated position he is vulnerable to the forces of nature which becomes an extension of the supernatural.

The killing of the fawn in Lugaid and the disappearance of the prey into the mist or perilous forest lures the hero to his predestined encounter with Sovereignty from whom he receives his kingship formally. The magic mist that falls in the *Cóir Anmann* and the perilous forest in *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin* are common devices for separating the hero(es) from his fellows and marking the transition to the supernatural world. The snowfall that ends the second hunt in the *Cóir Anmann* acts



in the same manner. The Luguids are separated from the rest of the hunting party by the mist, the snow storm ensures that they find Sovereignty's abode in order that she may make her selection. The need for water ensures this in the Níall tale. The quarry serves as a sovereignty allegory, being the agent of a preliminary selection amongst the Luguids and Níall and his brothers.

It is not far-fetched to visualise the enchanted fawn in Lugaid as only one of the myriad of forms that otherworldly Sovereignty might take. The deer is in this sense a 'divine' figure as it is in Christian symbolism making its popularity as a sculptural motif even more symbolically significant. The deer is generally represented in early chase themes as supernatural, an attribute shared with the deer of Christian lore. The hero must be lured into the otherworld before his worldly sovereignty can be bestowed upon him.

The selection of Níall in preference to his older brothers as future king, is analogous to the anointing of David and the judge Jephthah of Gilead, linking the "factors of illegitimacy and familial jealousy with an expulsion and return" according to McCone.<sup>20</sup> Although this motif is too widely spread in folklore for the influence of these biblical stories to be confidently postulated here, the possibility cannot be discounted as there "seems little doubt that monastic propagandists for the Uí Néill would have at least appreciated the welcome implications of the similarity with David especially, in view of his status as an ideal pre-Christian ruler."<sup>21</sup> McCone's suggestion of the parallel to Davidic imagery of the Níall story is interesting in light of the connection of the chase in Irish and Pictish sculpture with the symbolism of David and kingship. At least the symbolic meaning of the David story could have been recognised by those familiar with the Níall episode.

The chase in the Níall and Lugaid tales acts as an introductory motif and setting for an otherworldly adventure

which culminates in hero's encounter with Sovereignty and the foretelling of his imminent kingship. The motivation to hunt is provided by the need to select which lad will be the future ruler. The chase is the training ground for the young warriors, a place to hone their skills in weaponry, intelligence and strategic skills. The youths are forced to deal with the unknown dangers and wildness of nature outside the protectiveness of their society.

In accepting Sovereignty, Níall and Lugaid make the transition from youth to adulthood, hunter-warrior to king, and must give up the freedom of their warrior lives amongst other youths to return to society and take up the responsibilities of kingship. Both heroes must shed the untamed wildness of the youth on the fringes of society to take on the accountability and settled life of a king. The hunt acts as an allegory to this period of youth and a hero like Laígde or Níall, must prove his readiness for adulthood by defeating a wild beast. He thus symbolically slays his youth, preparing him for rebirth as an adult and a king.

The chase acts as a symbol for kingship and aspect of Sovereignty, as a male rite of passage for proving readiness for kingship through defeating a wild beast. This wild animal represents the untamed and chaos in comparison to Sovereignty which implies control and order.<sup>22</sup> Kingship is bestowed by a divine figure and thus, the chosen has a divine right to his position as in Christian ideals of divine kingship. The chase functions as a symbol of kingship and aspect of sovereignty. It acts as a male rite proving the hero's worth for kingship and sovereignty through hunting a wild beast, thus proving his control over the wildness of nature.

Níall and Lugaid are not average mortals, already having achieved semi-divine status in their selection for kingship by Sovereignty. Finn shares in this hero-god status, being lord of the *fíana* of Ireland and endowed with supernatural powers that set him apart from his warrior

companions. Níall, Lugaid and Finn all demonstrate the extra knowledge of prescience; they intuitively know how to deal with a supernatural situation. Whereas Finn uses his tooth of knowledge, Níall and Lugaid know the import of accepting Sovereignty's demand while their brothers decline her advances. They are reliable, able to wait and resist momentary impulse for the sake of a long term goal, all qualities of a successful huntsman and leader.<sup>23</sup> The fondness for hunting may be seen as part of "a deeper anti-social pattern within" the young hunters.<sup>24</sup>

What all have in common is their worthiness to be selected by the otherworld in some capacity because of their being of two worlds; the natural and the supernatural. Níall, Lugaid and Finn exist between two worlds, have special powers and qualities needed by the otherworld, and a role to play on both the mortal and supernatural planes.<sup>25</sup> The chase is the initial test of these powers and qualities. A man had to be courageous to take part in the hunt, therefore it was always included in the ideal conception of a man.<sup>26</sup> The chase prepares a man for war, teaching and maintaining mental and physical skills in times of peace for war. The hunt developed skills in weapons and tactics, crucial for a king who is leader in war.

The allegories of sovereignty discussed above involve a symbolic marriage between king and goddess, representing the union between the supernatural kingdom and his kingdom or the 'sacral kingship'. This symbolic marriage also indicates the end of youth and the special nature of kingship associated with the divine. The entering of the youth into a contract of marriage signals the end of his boyhood and entrance into manhood. Níall and Lugaid both take part in a marriage to Sovereignty while their siblings in refusing her remain in the realm of youth on the fringes of society.

The motif contains the ancient belief that land gained or lost fertility and prosperity according to whether it

had its rightful king.<sup>27</sup> It is possible that the search for water in the Níall tale and encounter at the well is associated with sovereignty and marriage. Lugaid encounters sovereignty in a house well stocked with ale. This may be linked with an idea of "drinking kingship" offered by a female sovereignty as in *Baile Chuind* (7th century) or of pouring libations.<sup>28</sup> The well may serve as an entrance to the otherworld, a motif common in later Medieval tales such as Arthurian romances and in the *Mabinogi* of Owain and the Lady of the Fountain.<sup>29</sup> The deer hunt is connected with water in these tales as in Christian imagery the deer is associated with brooks, fountains and urns. The chase then is not simply a literary device, it has a great significance in connection with the theme behind the story as it does in sculpture.

The Níall and Lugaid tales imply a connection of the hunt and Sovereignty motif with dynastic interests. This is entirely conceivable as the motif is more directly connected with such interests in a poem on the Leinster dynasties.<sup>30</sup> This poem sets out to explain the historical ramifications of the Laigin in North and South Leinster and the genealogical associations of the Osraige with the Laigin may date from the 9th century.<sup>31</sup> The poem was probably composed no later than 1120 as it is found in the manuscript Rawlinson B.502 and metrical features suggest an 11th century date.<sup>32</sup>

Verse Ten reads, "The Osraige [who got their name] from wild deer (*oss allaid*) are progeny of Connla who have been well deployed; it was a chief huntsman, a brave course, who reared Óengus Osraige."<sup>33</sup> *Os(s)* is the early Irish word meaning an ox which when associated with the word for wild *allaid* was used in various sources to mean "wild deer" as in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.<sup>34</sup> B.Ó Cuív points out that the poet probably assumed that his audience would be familiar with the traditional explanations of the name Osraige, as in the *Cóir Anmann* due to the brevity of this comment.<sup>35</sup>

Like Lugaid and his brothers, Óengus Osraige was the ancestor of a dynasty who probably had a sovereignty tale connected with him involving a chase and fosterage by a huntsman explaining the wild deer origins of the Osraige. Here the chase is connected with a dynastic theme in genealogical form including three major Leinster dynasties in its scope. Tales such as these centre on the forbearers of a chief ruling dynasty in early historical times and it is reasonable to assume that these tales were propagated in the interests of later high kings of the Uí Néill dynasty for propaganda purposes.<sup>36</sup>

These tales concerning the "myth of rightful kingship" have a dynastic intent behind them. The Níall story is often classified along with tradition called "The Cycle of Kings" centring on kings such as Cormac mac Airt, kingship and dynasties. This can be seen in the naming episodes of the Lugaid story. Each epithet bestowed by Sovereignty seems to be connected with a certain dynastic group, with Laígde as king over them all. Níall Noígíallach is an 'ancestor' figure in genealogical lore and is also recorded as a semi-historical ruler. According to tradition Níall was a 5th century king and ancestor of the Uí Néill dynasty.<sup>37</sup>

Like Níall Noígíallach, Lugaid is associated with a dynastic 'myth'. Lugaid is linked with Lugaid Mac Con, Lugaid Laígde's son in the Dindsenchas poem. Lugaid Mac Con is one of the early great kings before Níall (5th century).<sup>38</sup> The king Dáire appears in other sources as the father of Cú Roi, a mythical ancestor of the people called the Érainn who were traditionally among the oldest inhabitants of Ireland.<sup>39</sup> From the name Lugaid it is likely we find the mythical ancestor from whom the Irish traced decent - the god Lug.<sup>40</sup> Lugaid Laígde is also found as the ancestor of the Munster Érainn.<sup>41</sup> This links the chase with traditional figures of heroic kingship as it is to Christian kingly ideals like David as well as to the machinations of ruling dynasties.



These types of tales must have been a culmination of the intellectual impetus beginning in the 9th century which resulted in the "origin stories". According to N.K.Chadwick, the effect of this dynastic interest was the recording of native tradition, with an aim of creating a great national past.<sup>42</sup> These traditions expressed the rise of a national consciousness, especially at the close of the Viking period with the creation of wider consolidated kingdoms in Ireland.<sup>43</sup>

The origin of the ruling dynasties is attributed in general to about the 5th century.<sup>44</sup> Níall and Lugaid are heroic ancestor figures that powerful dynasties included in their genealogies. In Scotland this national consciousness seems to have begun with the union of the Pictish and Scottish kingdoms under Kenneth Mac Alpin and the emergence of a 'nation' about the mid 9th century.<sup>45</sup> Early Medieval Pictish and Irish monuments especially those with hunt and equestrian scenes date from this period (8th-9th centuries).

Could art have also been created by and shared common themes with the intellectual impetus fuelling the creation of a national literary past as an instrument of prominent nobles and kings? The hunt motif in sculpture could express an interest in power on a national scope by a king or dynastic group. Perhaps the sculpture of this period is an expression of such interests on a secular level. Artistic expression would serve to reinforce the claim of powerful magnates to power and prestige cultivated by dynastic prestige and political contacts through recording of these traditions.

In these Sovereignty tales it is apparent that the chase acts initially to prove the qualities of a good and rightful king. In most tales and texts, the most emphasised qualities of kingship are military, rulers being warriors in order to fulfil their role as protector. The most esteemed rulers have qualities beyond the military; wisdom, perfection, generosity and good judgement.<sup>46</sup> The hunt is



inextricably bound up with ideals of kingship and the warrior/hero. This idea is found throughout early Irish literature.

The *Auraicept na n-Éces* episode (Building of Nimrod's Tower) says of king Nimrod that, "A mighty man was he and a famous man in hunting, to wit, for stags, and in coursing, to wit for hares; and in trappings, to wit, wild pigs; and in snaring, to wit, for birds."<sup>47</sup> For these qualities many followed Nimrod, formed his armies, and made him powerful. This text is based upon the account of Nimrod found in the Old Testament, Genesis 10:6 associating the chase with ideals of Christian kingship.

In the *Tecosca Cormaic*, Cormac advises the youth Cairbre on the qualities of a good ruler. Cairbre asks of Cormac what his deeds were when he was a lad and Cormac answers, that he was, "a listener in the woods" and was "silent in the wilderness."<sup>48</sup> Cairbre asks Cormac again what his deeds were as a young man and Cormac answers, "I would slay a boar, I would follow a track when I was alone" as well as describing his warrior feats in battle.<sup>49</sup> Kuno Meyer judges this text to be no later than the first half of the 9th century<sup>50</sup> showing that from this date the ideal of the youth proving himself as a hunter was firmly embedded in early Irish tradition. This is also the period of the hunt upon Irish and Pictish sculpture.

The great warrior-king trains in arms at the hunt readying himself for battle, demonstrating intelligence and strategy at learning the ways of the forest. These qualities are found in the tale *Betha Finnhua Bri Gubann* in which Scannal son of the king<sup>of</sup> Huí Cairbri, declares that seven saints would come to deliver battle unless there were before him the one hero of the clans of Éogan of the sons of kings or crown-princes. The Munstermen inform him that such a man exists, one Cairpre the Bent the son of a king who has the makings of a king. Scannal is told that Cairpre is "a-hunting in difficult places and wastes and in forests, to wit, for (wild) swine and deer."<sup>51</sup> Once again

the young warrior and future king is proving himself in the wilderness with his weapons by hunting.

Cairpre is outside society as are Finn, Níall and Lugaid and is called back to claim his kingship, making the transition between youth and adulthood, wilderness and society with the chase as the testing medium. Skill in the hunt is also used to praise a warrior or hero, as in the *Gododdin*, where Urfai son of Golistan is described as being "swift on the track of the deer."<sup>52</sup> The hunt serves as a ritual status symbol and a demonstration of a ruler's power - that is the power to kill.

The chase of a supernatural boar is also a common theme in early Irish and Welsh literature. However, it appears infrequently as a sculptural motif (ie. the chase of *Twrch Trwyth*). Boars occur in Pictish hunts at St.Vigeans No.1 facing a crossbow-man and in Irish game drive motifs such as the Market Cross at Kells. This may emphasise the Christian symbolism of the use of the stag hunt upon the monuments. The hunting of certain animals with which kings and warriors were symbolically associated such as the deer or boar, may have been regarded as their most appropriate trial of strength and perhaps, prerogative.<sup>53</sup> These animals then may become symbols of heroic and royal strength.

The chase is part of the boyhood training or deeds of young heroes such as Cú Chulainn, Níall, Lugaid and Finn. The youth had to prove his prowess as a hunter as well as a warrior. This process is part of Cú Chulainn's early deeds after he takes arms.<sup>54</sup> After defeating the sons of Nechtan Scéne in a supernatural landscape, Cú Chulainn performs feats of skill in the hunt.<sup>55</sup> First he captures a flock of swans without killing them with two shots from his sling. Then the young hero captured a stag, making it submissive with one glance. He arrives back at Emain Macha with the spoils of his hunt and the heads of the Nechtan Scéne, proving his skill as both hunter and warrior. In the 10th century story *Fingal Rónáin*, Máel Fothartaig goes

hunting in order to escape the unwanted attentions of his father, the king's young wife.<sup>56</sup> The chase is obviously an accepted pursuit of the young prince to be sufficient enough an excuse for his absence from court.

*ii) Chase Motif in Fenian Legend:*

The cycle of tales surrounding the great Irish hero, Finn mac Cumail and his *fiana*, is a rich source of chase imagery and detail of the hunt. The chase motif is used in the same manner as in earlier sagas and tales, however, the description of the hunt is more elaborate. The descriptions of the hunt in earlier Irish myths and sagas are sparse, relating only the most relevant details. In contrast the hunts of the Fenian cycle are elaborately detailed, playing a far more prominent part in the lives of the young warriors. From these tales we may gain an idea of how prey was hunted, where the hunt took place and the ritualization of the hunt.

In this cycle of storytelling, we can see the beginnings of the influence of Continental methods of hunting that were later codified in hunting treatises. The hunts described in the Fenian tales contain some of the elements that were incorporated into early Welsh laws. This suggests that by the time these tales and the Welsh laws were recorded that Anglo-Norman influence upon Insular hunting practices was very strong. Also, where the Ulster cycle belonged primarily to the Ulaid alone, a specific geographic region, and a define time period in pseudo-history, the Fenian tales had no exclusive connections with any particular area or tribe as Finn and his *fiana* hunted and fought all over the country.<sup>57</sup> Finn and his band of followers are depicted as a *fían*, being a band of hunters and warriors.<sup>58</sup>

The Fenian cycle occurs at a later period than the Ulster Cycle being traditionally assigned to the 3rd century AD, located mainly in Leinster and Munster, rather than the Ulster and Connacht of the earlier sagas.<sup>59</sup> The Fenian cycle becomes prominent in the late Middle Irish

period while a few texts may be attributed to the Old and early Middle Irish period.<sup>60</sup> In about the 10th century, Finn is the centre of anecdotes relating to fighting, hunting, wooing and fairy-encounters and he is beginning to be associated with Cormac, king of Tara.<sup>61</sup> By the 11th century there are references to Finn in poems of *dindshenchas* type and in the 12th century many stories were written of ballad and lyric type concerning the exploits of Finn.<sup>62</sup>

The idea that the *fíana* has older roots in Ireland is suggested by references to them in the Annals, laws and Finn's link with Mac Con. Finn is connected with Mac Con in two texts. In one source Finn is described as Mac Con's *fennid* suggests Finn is Mac Con's *fían-leader*.<sup>63</sup> Tírechán's "Memoir of St. Patrick" in the *Book of Armagh* suggests that stories of Mac Con's *fíana* were current in the second half of the 7th century in which a giant the saint raises from the grave says that the *fían* of Mac Con slew him in the reign of Cairbre Nia Fer a hundred years earlier.<sup>64</sup>

The Fenian cycle marks a different type of lore than the earlier tales being more akin to Medieval romance than the preceding heroic stories. Finn and his *fíana* never leave the semi-magical realm of the forest and return to the responsibilities of society as the heroes of the earlier tales ultimately do. They remain in the obscurity of the wild places, eternal lost boys.

The Fenian cycle establishes the chase as an integral part of the life and training of a "professional warrior caste"<sup>65</sup> to whom the chase was a customary prerogative. In a certain fashion they represent the element of an Early Medieval society that would be depicted in later romance as the knight-errantry. Finn is depicted as the king's *gilla con* (servant in charge of hounds) and the spoils of the chase are prizes for themselves and their king.<sup>66</sup>

It is with the Fenian tales that we begin to get some idea of 'officers' of the hunt attached to a royal court. The importance of the hunt within the royal court is

testified to by the hierarchy of court officers and huntsmen within early Welsh legal texts. This connection of the chase with the royal court is a link between hero and society which allows him to remain a part of two worlds - society of men and the supernatural forest.

Often the animals pursued by the *fíana* have magical qualities as in the earlier tales. In the *Acallam na Senórach*, Cú Chulainn and a *fían*, Donn, hunt and kill a magical swine which they present to the king of Ireland, for which Donn is rewarded an appointment to the *ríg fennid* of the Tara *fíana*.<sup>67</sup> This suggests that a band of huntsmen of high esteem was attached to the court of the king (these tales are from the late 12th century). As J.F. Nagy states, Donn must pass the test of killing a magical beast proving his access to the supernatural found outside of society which "are translated from the natural world of the *fennidecht* to the human world through the relationship between the *fennid* and the king, who distributes among his subjects the gifts of the *fennid*"<sup>68</sup> in order to gain his reward. Finn is represented as the chief of the household of king Cormac, head of his *fíana* and the household retinue.<sup>69</sup>

The Fenian epic represents a band of men who survive by hunting and warfare. The *fíana* are a company of hunter-warriors under the authority of a leader, Finn who in turn is under the authority of the king. They spend the hunting season traversing the wild areas of the country hunting and engaging in warfare. The *fíana* inhabit the margins of society, the forest, the domain heroes of earlier sagas such as Cú Chulainn, Lugaid and Níall visit briefly. The *fíana* live in a nether-realm in the liminal space between two worlds; the natural and supernatural. In other words, like the heroes of the sovereignty tale, they have a double character. The *fían* was made up of propertyless young men who had left fosterage but not yet inherited land to settle upon or married, which was integral to receiving property.<sup>70</sup>

These aspects of the *fíana* also made the hunter-



warrior feared by society. In the *Acallam na Senórach*, Garbhdáire mac Angus, son of the king of Munster, is slain by the men of the region who see him hunting and deprive him of his game.<sup>71</sup> In revenge the *fíana* kill the county's three kings and cause the surviving inhabitants to flee. It is the fear and suspicion of those living outside of the civilised pale that cause such an uprising. The freedom to the chase is a statement of power and fear. In the *Hisperica Famina* (about 7th century) the freedom of the hunter also creates conflict between the hunter and members of society.<sup>72</sup> A rampaging band of brigands hunting a boar are found by the inhabitants of the region in a forest upon their boundary lands and fearing attack, drive the hunters from their land.<sup>73</sup>

M.L.Sjoestedt and Nagy discuss how the *fíana* live on the margin of society, in the forest, wilderness and domain of the mysterious forces of the supernatural.<sup>74</sup> The adventures of the *fíana* occur as Nagy describes it "in zones beyond the civilised pale, or between the human and supernatural pales."<sup>75</sup> Lugaid and Níall of the Sovereignty tales also inhabit this world, setting a precedent for this tradition and implying the antiquity of these ideas. This tradition is not unique to Finn tales alone, but reaches its fullest usage in Fenian lore. The fierceness of the hunt and the wilderness brings the hero into contact with the supernatural, endowing him with what Sjoestedt calls a "double character"<sup>76</sup> by proving himself able to live on the margins of society and the supernatural world. The hunt simply represents the hero's first successful contact with the otherworld.

The wilderness as a place to hunt and learn feats of arms constitutes the designated vocation of the youth on the verge of manhood in many cultures.<sup>77</sup> The youth enters manhood by confronting death physically through the medium of the hunt (death of the deer) and symbolically (death of youth).<sup>78</sup> Nagy states that this element of the tale represents the space of time in which the hero is



"ultimately searching for adulthood."<sup>79</sup> In the *Tecosca Cormaic* a man is a *fennid* until he obtains a household [*fennid cach co trebad*].<sup>80</sup>

Finn never leaves this world remaining suspended between civilisation and the otherworld. Upon receiving their elevated status formally from Sovereignty, Níall and Lugaid are allowed to return to society transformed into their new capacities. According to T.M.Charles-Edwards, status implies a hierarchy of social ranks determined by systematic social differentiation using a general scheme of valuation according to occupation, wealth, etc.<sup>81</sup> The hero has distinguished his social status through the test of the hunt, a privilege of those of noble and warrior status. Honour is also gained through the test of the chase, dividing those of the same rank (the companions) into positions of inferior and superior in relationship to one another.<sup>82</sup> Man as hunter belongs to two overlapping social structures, the family and the *fían*, and must constantly move between the two realms.<sup>83</sup> This is the domain belonging exclusively to the male before he gains status as a warrior and adult. It may be this dual and extraordinary aspect that is represented symbolically by the chases upon the monuments of Ireland and Pictland.

The hunt is part of the training at arms and boyhood deeds of the young hero, prince or noble as is apparent in the story of Finn's boyhood *Macgnímartha Find*. The *Macgnímartha Find* appears to be 12th century in date.<sup>84</sup> The tale of the boyhood deeds of Finn exhibits similarities to the tales of Níall and Lugaid. Finn is raised by the druidess Bodbmall, Fíacail son of Conchun, and the Grey One of Lúachair. Finn is then reared by women-warriors (like Cú Chulainn) until he is fit to be a warrior. His first chases, like those of Cú Chulainn in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* are birds and deer.

One of Finn's first chases is to catch a duck and take it to his hunting-booth. Another of his first hunts is said to have been seven deer from Sléive Bloom.<sup>85</sup> When out

hunting with the two female warriors they see some deer on the ridge of a mountain and the women lament not being able to get hold of one. Finn says he can and dashes off to catch two stags and after that he hunts for them constantly.<sup>86</sup> Finn is able to run fast enough to catch the deer, an extraordinary feat. He can run as fast as a deer just as classical hero Achilles who kills deer without weapons but by running faster than his prey.<sup>87</sup> Finn is thereby identified with his prey just as his son Óisín who is half-human half-deer, which is consistent with the image of Finn and the *fíana* as "paradigmatic hunters."<sup>88</sup> This identification with a beast of the hunt is an expression of the hero's exceptional nature and the liminal world in which he exists.<sup>89</sup>

These ideas of the hunt as the pastime of the young aristocrat have grounding in Classical tradition. In the plays of Terence we find passages from Phormio and Andria alluding to the activities of the young men of the Roman aristocracy who spend their time with horses and hounds taking part in the chase.<sup>90</sup> In Greek myth the chase is a test of valour (ie. Hunt of the Calydonian Boar). Xenophon writing in the mid 4th century BC states that hunting brings bodily health, improves sight and hearing, is an antidote to senility and excellent training in the art of war.<sup>91</sup> His praise of hunting is directed at the upper classes in the *Cynegeticus*, insisting on the educational value of the hunt as essential to military success and other affairs requiring excellence of thought, word, and deed.<sup>92</sup> Xenophon advises that hunting should be taken up just as one is changing from boyhood and from it proceed to other forms of education.<sup>93</sup>

The existence of such bands of hunter-warriors inhabiting the wilderness has archaic roots. The Athenian *ephebia* represented the period between youth and complete participation in society and as long as the youth's expectations of society remained unfulfilled (marriage and position in army) his relation to civilisation was

ambiguous as he was and was not a member.<sup>94</sup> The *ephebe* (young warrior) of Athens is marginal to the civilised world for a temporary period.<sup>95</sup>

Finn is able to fulfil the responsibilities of a marginal existence along with periodical contacts with the inhabited world, through his position with the king. This suggests that Finn as a hunter-warrior possessed the extra power of being able to transverse the distance between two different worlds; the natural and unnatural. The *fíana* inhabit a world of prolonged adolescence<sup>96</sup> removed from societal reality and belonging to the realm of myth. The world of the *fíana* is a frontier zone, the area of forests and mountainous country between zones of population. The *fíana* are a closed group bound by their potential for aggression which was released through the violence and danger of the hunt.

The hunt focuses upon prey which resemble men in movement and emotion (flight, fear, aggression, rage just as an enemy in war) and thus become sacrificial victims spawning the respect and love the hunter felt for his prey and fellow huntsmen.<sup>97</sup> The aggressive nature of the warrior is redirected toward the prey which thereby gains the status of a personality<sup>98</sup> as attested by the many beasts that are transformed humans in early Celtic lore. This classical idea of the animal as a sacrifice complements the symbol of the hunt in Christian imagery upon Irish and Pictish sculpture. The monumental chases may also portray the aggressiveness and power of men who hunt.

In early Irish tales of war (ie. *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, *Cath Almaine*, *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin*), sexual strife (*Fingal Rónáin*), and the chase (*Níall*, *Lugaid*, Fenian tales) the close band of men representing the warrior-hunter class of society engage in warfare and the hunt, moving on the fringes of society in order to fulfil their roles as protectors and providers for the community. These aspects are frightening to the ordinary citizen living within the limits of society. The *fían* lives outside the

community in war, hunting, death, and blood in order to ensure a sense of security within society. That the protector of society the king, is often depicted hunting upon Pictish and Irish sculpture is an interesting parallel to this idea.<sup>99</sup>

The *fíana* are held together by the ritual collective power to kill in the chase, only successful through solidarity and cooperation. The frightening confrontation with death in the slaying of the prey and shock of survival represented by the hunt leaves a deep impression both as a literary and artistic device. The hunt became a ritual status symbol due to such symbolism where hunting was no longer necessary due to agriculture. The chase is an expression and demonstration of the ruling class' power to kill. In this sense the hunt becomes removed from the everyday world in accordance with the ritual of the chase in which the hunt, war and sacrifice are symbolically interchangeable.<sup>100</sup>

The chase in the Fenian Cycle functions as a literary motif in a similar manner to the earlier tales. The hunt is used regularly to establish the setting for an adventure often of marvellous kind to take place. An episode in the *Acallam na Senórach* (tells of Cúilte and Ossian and their followers who after the death of Finn and most of the *fíana* in battle, meet St. Patrick and tell him the legends connected with hills, lakes, forests, etc. which they see on their travels about Ireland mostly related to Finn) relates how a beautiful fawn was chased by Finn and the *fíana*.<sup>101</sup> They chase the fawn until vanishes underground. A snow storm forces them to seek shelter. Finn sends Cúilte to find shelter and he discovers a *síd* inhabited by warriors and fair maidens. The master of the *síd*, Donn mac Midir seeks Finn's help against the *Túatha Dé Danann*.

The chase introduces a supernatural adventure. The familiar motif of a fawn leading the hunters astray and into a hostile environment leads Finn into an underground encounter with the otherworldly denizens of a *síd* who seek

his help. In this tale a maiden in the shape of a fawn lures Finn to the síd, Donn telling Finn that she was sent out by him to fetch them.<sup>102</sup> As Finn can exist between two worlds; the natural and supernatural, he has talents needed by Donn to combat his supernatural enemies.<sup>103</sup>

M.Breathnach suggests that the theme of the relationship between the hero and sovereignty goddess is linked by a hunt motif in the death tales of Finn, *Cath Finntragha*.<sup>104</sup> While hunting Finn accidentally violates his taboo not to drink of a horn in that he drinks from a well on a hill named Adarcaibh Luchbaa and then recites a poem which tells of the many drinks offered to him by women identifiable as sovereignty goddesses in his past life.<sup>105</sup>

Besides acting as a literary motif, the chase in Fenian lore is a rich source of information concerning how hunting was practised and what animals were considered worthy prey. Due to the fantastic nature of these stories, the descriptions of the chase are subject to exaggeration. However, the 'bare bones' of the chase scenes in Fenian tales may serve to tell us something about how the hunt was conducted. One of the most striking features of the Fenian chase are the sheer numbers of men who participate in and animals slain during a hunt. The enormous numbers of beasts killed in these chases are an exaggeration and must be regarded with a sense of reserve and proportion.

In the stories of the *Duanaire Finn* such as the *Enchanted Stag*<sup>106</sup> two hundred warriors take "a hundred stags from every oak grove that held a bush" and "a hundred deer, a hundred stags" are killed with spears in a single day.<sup>107</sup> It is in the forest undergrowth that the deer is harboured (located earlier before the hunt) and then flushed out during the chase. This tale is one of marvellous nature in which Finn with a hundred and twenty followers, ten hundred hounds, a hundred women and a hundred men set off to pursue the enchanted deer, Donn of Dubhlinn. This description gives an idea of the ceremony



surrounding the chase. Not only are a group of huntsmen involved, but their hounds, and attendants.

When Finn tells the tale of his search for his drinking-horn in *Síd na mBan Finn* he describes what he sees from his mound of the chase: "we were listening to the noise of the warriors, and to the din of the multitude, and to the bustle of the attendants, and to the voices of the hounds, and to the whistling of the hunters, and to the inciting of the hounds by the warriors, and to the shouts of the young lads, and to the turmoil of the chase on every side of us."<sup>108</sup> We can see that the notables of the hunt often watched the proceedings from a hunting-mound. This watching of the chase by the persons of highest social position suggests that the hunt was becoming highly ritualised and ceremonial. This is reminiscent of the chase scenes upon Pictish cross-slabs like Aberlemno No.3 or Hilton of Cadboll.

The chase in these tales and the earlier examples generally take place in wild spaces - the forest, mountain sides and plains. It is these wild places that are mentioned in 8th century Irish law tracts concerning the setting of traps for deer. This suggests that from an early period such regions were recognised as the best places to hunt. In the *Chase of Síd na mBan Finn*<sup>109</sup> a great chase held by Finn "was arranged and spread by them throughout the woods and wildernesses and sloping glens of the lands nearest to them, and throughout smooth, delightful plains, and close-sheltering woods, and broad-bushed, vast, oak forests."<sup>110</sup> Each of the *fíana* went to his hunting-mound (*dumha sealga*) from which to view the progress of the chase and join as it passed along the hunting route arranged.

In general, it is not until the Fenian tales that we find the species of deer hunted being mentioned. Deer must have been plentiful during the Early Medieval period in regions such as Ireland and Scotland as there appears to have been very little restriction upon hunting them. From the great number of bones and teeth of red deer excavated



it appears that the species supplied man with an abundant resource of meat and raw materials for at least 5 000 years throughout northern Europe.<sup>111</sup> Quantities of bones have been found in Scottish hillfort sites such as Craig Phadraig showing a high proportion of red deer.<sup>112</sup> The large red deer was likely the "supreme animal of the hunt"<sup>113</sup> favoured by the king and aristocracy as the noblest beast of the chase.

As well as being valued as a prestige beast of the chase and for its meat, the deer was highly prized for its antler. Antler was used by craftsmen to fashion luxury items such as carved plaques and combs as well as practical items such as cross-bow nuts. Combs and comb-cases were often fashioned from antler or bone and have been found in 5th century contexts such as Spong Hill, Norfolk;<sup>114</sup> as well as Ardglass, York, Buckquoy and Lagore and as symbols on Pictish sculpture. In the *Uraicecht Becc* (Old Irish law tract, 7th-8th century), the status of various craftsmen is mentioned including the comb-maker.<sup>115</sup> In light of this discussion it may be assumed that the red deer was widely hunted and prized as a kingly pursuit, and that deer also provided the practical items of meat, bone, antler and pelts.

Due to the large number of people involved in the chase and prey slain, it is evident that the hunt probably took place over several days. During the day the chase would take place followed by feasting and storytelling at night. For example, the night before the hunt of the giant boar Formáel, Finn and the *fíana* feast at the stronghold of Maillen son of Midhna.<sup>116</sup> The hunters rise early on the morning of the chase and each fenian warrior goes to his "shooting-site" (*láthair licthi*) and "gap of danger" to wait for the chase to pass and join the pursuit. This ensures that the prey was constantly being pursued by fresh men and hounds.

The hounds are unleashed throughout the forests, glens, and "traps [marshes?] of the chase" (*n-énaighi*

*sealga*) were set up on a level expanse. *Énaighi* is a form of the word *enach* meaning "moor, swamp, bog, fen" as well as denoting a "narrow passage" or "place fit for an ambush", hence its use as a term for a snare or trap. The term is also used to refer to hunting and fowling in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Dindshenchas*, therefore, perhaps is used in a similar manner here to describe a place or method of hunting. Only after many warriors and hounds have been killed does Finn join the fray with his warriors and nobles of the *fían* who had been observing the chase from the vantage point of the hunting-mound. The notables of the hunt would only join the chase once the beast had been brought to bay for the glory of the kill.

The spear is often used to dispatch prey on Pictish and Irish monuments as well as in legend. The use of traps or pitfalls for hunting occur in early Irish law (see Chapter 2.1). In the *Dinshenchas* of *Mag Coba*, *Coba*, a warrior, tool-wright, and trapper, fashions a pitfall in which he falls after placing his foot in it to see if he had set the trap in trim.<sup>117</sup> The pitfall is described as "an imprisoning pen" and the nature of the name suggests a pit into which the prey would fall when driven in that direction. A unique illustration of a trap used to capture a deer is illustrated upon the cross shaft of Banagher, Clonmacnois in which the stag has caught a foot in a quadrangular frame.

That the king or hero is most often depicted taking part in coursing or driving game with hounds in literary as well as upon visual sources suggests that this type of chase was the prerogative of the king and aristocratic ranks of society. That *Coba* in the *Dindshenchas* story is a craftsman being a tool-wright as well as bearing arms suggests the possibility that trapping was the domain of men skilled status. That a smith figure often teaches youths to hunt and take arms in early tales such as *Lugaid* or *Níall* suggests that the craftsmen were highly esteemed men in the community to which they belonged with hunting

privileges. This recalls the Pictish Dunfallandy cross-slab with a horseman associated with an anvil and tong symbol.

The chase often took the form of a game drive. This type of chase may be paralleled in the hunt scenes upon crosses such as the Kells Market Cross. The descriptions of the chase in Fenian tales are similar to the basic manner in which game was hunted in Early Medieval Europe. From the descriptions of the chase in the Fenian cycle, we can see that the hunt took the form of a drive in which the huntsmen waited along the route of the chase for the game to be driven towards them. The sheer numbers of people and equipment needed for such a large chase would suggest that this type of hunt was suited to a king and powerful nobility as they would have the necessary retinue and wealth to sustain such ventures. The drive hunt is a ritual demonstration of power and wealth, the domain of the royal or heroic, such as Finn.

It is not very clear whether deer were hunted on horseback in the early tales or Fenian cycle. The form of the deer hunt in the Sovereignty tales of Níall and Lugaid suggest that the youths hunted on foot with their hounds. In the *Táin Bó Fraích*, Froech and his retinue ride their horses to the hunt but then dismount before unleashing their hounds.<sup>118</sup> The deer hunts upon Pictish and Irish sculpture suggest that coursing did take place on horse back depicting mounted huntsmen accoutered as warriors involved in the chase. However, on some examples the hunters follow the prey on foot such as Cross of Scriptures, Clonmacnois and Eassie, Angus. Hunting on horseback occurs in early Welsh tradition. In the early *Mabinogion* tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen* the fabulous steeds *Gwyn Dun-Mane* and *Du of Moro Oerfeddawg* are mounts required to hunt the boar *Twrch Trwyth*.<sup>119</sup>

The foot warriors in chases such as Aberlemno No.3 may have acted as attendants or *gillai*. The duties of the attendants or *gillai* accompanying the warriors upon the chase are suggested in the *Agallamh Beag* which may preserve

the beginning of the Colloquy which was thought lost.<sup>120</sup> Cáilte's *gilla*, Feargaire, at the end of the day carries the spoils of the hunt on his back to the hunting camp.<sup>121</sup> Feargaire also makes a wide hut or hunting-booth while the warriors hunt so that a bed is ready for every two of them and each hound when they return from the hunt and prepares a meal.<sup>122</sup> The gillie constructs a *fulacht fíada* for cooking the meat from the hunt by making a hole with gravelly sides by the edge of a stream and letting water in, kindling a large fire and heating stones so that the meat could be boiled.<sup>123</sup> A *fulacht* is a cooking-pit or fireplace.<sup>124</sup>

The Fenian cycle is the first in Celtic legend to give us some idea that loose hunting 'preserves' may have existed or at least areas recognised as a particular eminence's place to hunt. The 'forest' or hunting preserve became encoded and protected in 13th century England by law. The *Acallam na Senórach* mentions many places as hunting sites used by Finn and the *fíana* such as Ben-Edar.<sup>125</sup> Cáilte describes the area from *ros mic Triuin* beyond in Feguille, as a hunting preserve (*lubgort sealga*) associated with Finn.<sup>126</sup> Cáilte describes a hunting-preserve of Finn as *giúsach Finn* used by the *fíana* when game was scarce between the "inneoin of Moyfemen and Ben-Edar."<sup>127</sup> *Giúsach* refers to a fir or pine-wood, being the collective of the term for a pine or fir (*giús*).<sup>128</sup>

However, at this early period (before 12th century) there was no system of hunting preserves established in Ireland or Scotland controlled by king or aristocracy. As these tales suggest it is more likely that the nobility had favoured hunting grounds. That hunting-preserves are referred to in the 12th century *Acallam* suggests the Anglo-Norman influence of the royal forests being established throughout England. The right to hunt probably depended on the status of the individual.

The earliest European hunting-preserves to be recorded are of the Frankish Empire.<sup>129</sup> The Franks and Carolingians

had established reserves and royal forests which could only be created through royal grant with penalties for offenders in these areas. The earliest hunting-preserves (area used for hunting to which a particular individual is entitled and controlled) in Scotland are likely of the 12th century or later.<sup>130</sup>

The Fenian hunt shares many features in common with Continental practices, especially those encoded in later Medieval hunting treatises. However, earlier influences upon the Insular hunt may have come from the Carolingian empire. The influence of 9th century Carolingian royal hunting practices is suggested by court poetry. A description of the hunt in a poem by Ermoldus Nigellus a Carolingian court poet (814-40) about Louis the Pious describes the baying of the hounds in the woods, the uproar of the men's cries, blast of the horn, stags, does, boars, spears and a thronged retinue.<sup>131</sup> In another poem dedicated to Louis the Pious, Ermoldus describes the events around the baptism of the Danish prince Heriodd at the palace-chapel details a hunt in which the queen takes place attended by a retinue of magnates in honour of the king.<sup>132</sup>

This is also the type of scene found upon Pictish sculpture in which hunts involve trumpeters, retinues of men and various deer and hounds (Hilton of Cadboll even includes a woman and attendant as part of the chase composition) and is similar to descriptions in Fenian legend. The nobility who hunted with the king shared his favour and generosity while providing provisions for the court, joining the king and his men in the excitement of collective action and reward an appropriate corollary to military cooperation.<sup>133</sup> "The hunt as a ritual, like processions and feasts, manifested participation as well as hierarchy, reciprocity as well as patriarchal authority."<sup>134</sup> This sense is evident from Old Irish texts like *Táin Bó Froéach* and *Longes Mac nUislenn*.

Early Welsh tradition also offers examples of the



social and symbolic functions of the hunt. Similarities between Irish and Welsh tradition such as themes as the chase of *Twrch Trwyth* and characters like Arthur appear from an early period in North British, Welsh and Irish lore.<sup>135</sup> Both The boar and Arthur occur in Nennius' *Historia Brittonum* (early 9th century). The hunt of the boar *Twrch Trwyth* occurs in the *Mirabilia* of the *Historia Brittonum* and in the tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen* in the *Mabinogion*. The boar also appears in early Irish literature such as Cormac's Glossary<sup>136</sup> and the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* as *Torc Triath*.<sup>137</sup> Hunts of supernatural boars also have a prominent place within Fenian tradition. The hunting exploits of Arthur are an important part of the *Mabinogion* and can be compared to the chases of Finn. Like Finn, Arthur is a warrior-hunter figure who defends his kingdom with the help of a faithful retinue of knights.

In the tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen* the chase appears to have a similar form to that in Fenian lore. The descriptions of the huntsmen needed to hunt the *Twrch Trwyth* imply this. For example, the huntsmen *Mabon son of Modron*, *Garselit* chief huntsman of Ireland and the son of *Alun of Dyfed* are required to hunt the boar.<sup>138</sup> These hunters are described as being in control of the hounds and Alun is called an unleasher of hounds. The hunt of the fantastic boar needs a great retinue of huntsmen, heroes, kings, hounds and equipment much as in Fenian chases.

Arthur also appears as a great hero like Finn in a poem from the *Book of Taliesin*, "*The Spoils of Annwn*", an early version of the quest for the Grail (about 10th century). In the poem Arthur is the head of a band of warriors much as Finn is leader of the *fíana*. Arthur and his men engage in otherworldly adventures in pursuit of the Cauldron of *Annwn* much as Finn and the *fíana* encounter otherworldly escapades.

The tradition of the hunt for *Twrch Trwyth* and the hero Arthur suggest an early Celtic shared tradition which the Picts potentially shared in. The warrior-hunter figure



and a supernatural prey are one of the inherited themes shared throughout Celtic tradition. That Fenian heroes are alluded to in *Culwch ac Olwen* suggests that the Fenian cycle was known in Wales.<sup>139</sup>

In early Welsh literary sources allusions to the chase are used to praise heroes or kings or describe their actions. Chase imagery is used to emphasise the theme of victory, thereby glorifying the triumphant king and his host. In the poetry of *Canu Llywarch Hen* (probably originally written down in the early 9th century,<sup>140</sup> hunt imagery is used to praise a great warrior and lord. The poems take an elegiac form dedicated to the dead lord of the poet. The narrator, Llywarch Hen, a warrior and poet, lived in the 6th and 7th centuries and was well-known to Welsh nobility of the Middle Ages.<sup>141</sup> As a warrior attached to the lord Urien's court, Llywarch would have been well versed in the pleasures and glories of the chase. For example, Llywarch speaks of the hall of Urien his lord: "Many a brave hound (*cyn*) and powerful hawk (*hebawg*)/Were fed on its floor/Before this place was in ruins."<sup>142</sup> The mention of the hounds and hawks serve to demonstrate the wealth and power of the lord Urien and his court. In Wales and Ireland, the chase in literary sources appears to have been an aristocratic pleasure. In *Manawydan* hunting for pleasure is explicitly distinguished from hunting for necessity.<sup>143</sup>

### *iii) Chase Motif in Hagiography:*

Early Celtic saints' lives also include images of the chase further illustrating how the hunt motif was used and aiding our understanding of the ritual of the chase in Celtic society. Few saints' lives appear to use the hunt motif as a moral warning. The hunt appears as a typical feature of the flamboyance of court life.<sup>144</sup> Hunting, as we have seen, is very much a prerogative of youth and warrior, a pastime to be indulged in before responsibilities to society are taken up such as marriage.<sup>145</sup> In this sense the chase motif may function as

an icon of Pride.<sup>146</sup> The chase motif in hagiography may provide a sense of challenge to a lifestyle considered wrong and frivolous.

The chase motif functions in the familiar anticipatory role whether as the initiator of a vision or prophecy, adventure or pastoral sequence. Beasts of the chase, notably the deer, often seek shelter in the saint's bosom from the hunter. In return the beasts provide the saint with food, act as plough animals or speak, placing the theme into the realm of the miracle. The hind and fawn appearing in hagiography may be "a symbol of the social norm of harmony and completeness, interrupted by the hunter."<sup>147</sup> The motifs of the saint taming a wild animal and yoking wild stags represent the theme of the divine power manifested by the saint.<sup>148</sup> The beast as saint's helper is also a sign of the saint's sanctity.<sup>149</sup> The *vita sancti* was designed to depict its subject as an exemplar of holiness.<sup>150</sup>

Saints' lives are a "fusion of convention and propaganda" combining the spiritual and earthly legacies of a saint in order to promote the monastic foundations associated with his name.<sup>151</sup> Few Irish hagiographers had access to genuine information on their subject and resorted to traditional lore, hagiographical convention, secular saga elements and contemporary social history.<sup>152</sup> Each *Irish Life* is a source for its own time, conveying the attitudes of a particular monastic community in response to a particular time and circumstances.<sup>153</sup>

The saint's life is similar to heroic saga and romance on a thematic level. Irish hagiographers were able to draw upon a vast collection of international, Biblical and native Irish elements, available through ecclesiastical learning and Irish storytelling traditions.<sup>154</sup> The closest parallel to a saint's life in Irish narrative tradition is the hero tale with which the saint's life has several structural similarities.<sup>155</sup> The hero tale is characterised by the extraordinary conception and birth of the hero; his

career of marvellous deeds; a major conflict in which the hero wins; and the unusual death of the hero.<sup>156</sup> Miracles are the manifestations and testimonies of the saint's holiness as much as the deeds of the hero symbolised his heroic nature.<sup>157</sup> It is this link of the saint to the hero that emphasises the ability of certain motifs like the chase to be used in both a Christian and secular sense at once.

The chase is an initiating action that leads to a change in spiritual status, and in this way does not differ much from the hunt motif in heroic or sovereignty tales. Also, the use of the chase motif contributes to the ideas and themes of the tale, moving the plot along. The saint as a hermit occupies the forest or wilderness much as the hunters of the Fenian or sovereignty tales. Both protagonists occupy the natural world outside of the society of man and seem to be between the human world and the otherworld, in limbo between nature and culture.

The chase motif in hagiography, as in the heroic tales, introduces an aspect of conflict and confrontation, usually between the saint and the hunter. Often the saint is brought into conflict with a king. The king due to a guilty conscience performs acts of charity such as granting land for a foundation to the saint or acts of repentance. The hero-king in early Irish narrative has a divine-power, being less than gods but more than mortal.<sup>158</sup> They function as protectors, providers of material well-being, healers of disease, lawmakers and judges. The saint performs the same functions of protection, provision and healing as well as being the designated agent of God, providing spiritual leadership and acts as a mediator between heaven and earth.<sup>159</sup>

The holy hermit unlike the hero however, lives in intimate communion with nature, exercising a paternal authority over it according to P. Mac Cana.<sup>160</sup> Animals often pay homage to the saint, serving him in various ways. The saint in turn prefers the tranquillity of nature to the

world of men. The saint exists harmoniously with nature, while the hero must conquer it in some manner, for example through the hunt. Perhaps here we have a remnant of ancient Celtic belief in a "lord of the animals", like the antlered deity, Cernunnos found upon Gallo-Roman relief and upon the Gundestrup cauldron. The lord of the animals figure acted as a protector and ruler of animate nature. In the Welsh tale of *Owain*, a analogous deity to Cernunnos summons the animals through the belling of a stag, who do obeisance to him as one would to a lord.<sup>161</sup> Beasts of the forest often aid the saint in various ways by acting in the manner of a domesticated creature or even a man, such as the boar that helps St. Ciaran of Saighir in the building of a cell along with a fox, badger, wolf and stag which act in the manner of monks.

The hunt motif in hagiography may serve as in visual imagery, to symbolise the Christian soul in pursuit of salvation through Christ. Irish saints are frequently involved with elements of nature, especially wild animals.<sup>162</sup> Animals often have the role of companions or helpers, a sign of the sanctity of the saint as well as his divine power.<sup>163</sup> The chase may also represent Christ as the victim, persecuted by devils (the hunters and hounds), thus representing the Passion. This is a figure of Christ as both divine and mortal and emblem of the divine victim.<sup>164</sup> This is in accordance with the Christian concept of the victim victorious<sup>165</sup> and may be one reason why the motif was accepted to convey religious as well as secular ideals upon Insular sculpture. The chase and the deer function within hagiography in the following ways:

1. Chase as Sanctuary Motif;
2. Deer as Animal-Helper;
3. Chase's role in visions and land-grants.

*1. Chase as Sanctuary Motif:* Beasts of the chase seeking a saint's protection occur in various Irish saint's lives. In the versions of the *Life of Coemgen*, a boar seeks the hermit's shelter from the huntsmen.<sup>166</sup> Coemgen performs a

miracle in which the feet of the hounds cleave to the ground. As in the *Life of Maedoc of Ferns* it is the hounds that are impeded or punished for their pursuit. This is in accordance with hounds being portrayed as the evil pursuers in psalmic imagery. The saint protects the victim, bringing him into conflict with the forces represented by the hunters and hounds over which he is triumphant. In sheltering a creature of the forest, the saint is brought into close contact with nature as well as demonstrating his "lordship of the animals", divine power and sanctity.

In the various versions of the Irish *Life of Maedoc of Ferns*, a stag is transformed into a man. Maedoc who is reading his psalms one day is confronted by a stag pursued by hunters seeking his protection so he put his rosary on the stag's antlers.<sup>167</sup> The stag then appears to the hounds as a man and escapes. The miraculous transformation of the stag into a man may parallel the idea of the victim as Christ, both as divine and mortal. That the saint appears reading psalms is interesting in light of the stag hunt's connection with the psalms in Christian symbolism. We should note that the saint appears as a "lord of animals or nature" in contrast to the king or hero who appears as "lord of humankind."<sup>168</sup> This interpretation could have helped this particular motif to be repeated in various forms in Celtic hagiography.

The motif of the saint sheltering a deer from its pursuers who then provides him with milk or acts as a plough beast leads the saint into confrontation with the hunter. The yoking of the stag is a motif representing the theme of the divine power of the saint as the milking of the doe demonstrates the theme of the saint's function as provider.<sup>169</sup> This may represent a conflict between religious and secular interests as the hunter symbolises secular power. Conflict between secular and ecclesiastical factions is fraught, according to Irish traditions, but ultimately Christian righteousness triumphs.<sup>170</sup> This also may reflect the clergy's disapproval of the practices of



the *fíana* (whom they often refer to as brigands), who in these tales may be represented by the hunters.<sup>171</sup>

The deer in the chase motif both in hagiography and heroic tales acts as a guiding beast. However, unlike the guiding deer of the heroic tale, the deer of the saints' lives does not disappear once it has initiated the critical meeting and the huntsman is often a subsidiary character.<sup>172</sup> The meeting is with a holy man, usually a hermit and the deer's serving of the hermit may indicate his holy innocence. The deer serves the saint in a manner which is included as one of the saint's miracles. The saint is not part of the everyday world to which the deer leads the huntsmen. The saint represents the spiritual, mystic and supernatural in these stories as do the marvellous figures of the sovereignty and heroic tales. The chase motif is part of a sequence of events whose logic is understood as being different from that of the everyday world.<sup>173</sup> The saint as part of the natural world outside everyday human existence is so close to nature that he is able to milk hinds like cows, indicating his seminaturalness.<sup>174</sup>

*2. Deer as Animal-Helper:* In early Irish and Welsh hagiography, the saint often has a closeness to nature and the deer. The deer generally appears as an animal helper within saints' lives, serving the holy man in the manner of a domestic beast, providing nourishment or performing the duties of a domestic draught beast.

In the *Life of Coemgen*, there is a shortness of milk, so Coemgen commands a doe with her fawn to give half her milk to his foster-child, Fáelán son of Colmáin.<sup>175</sup> The child was nourished by the miracles of God and Coemgen. A doe nourishes a saint with her milk in the *Life of Brendan of Clonfert*.<sup>176</sup> As a child Brendan studies with Bishop Erc who had neither milk nor milch cow. One day Brendan asks for some milk. Erc says that God can do this and from then on a doe would come with its fawn to be milked for him. The doe in these saints' lives provides milk as would a



domestic cow for the use of man. Her milk is provided for the nourishment of a child who will one day be of note, such as the son of a king, or a prospective saint. The motif of the deer serving the saint in some manner, always involves the wild animal acting in a tame or domesticated manner.

The deer serves the saint in another domesticated manner. In the *Miorbuile Sénain* (Miracles of Senan), one of Senan's miracles is a stag that would come from the mountain to the plough, harness itself and plough just like an ox.<sup>177</sup> In the *Life of Berach*, Coemgen puts Berach's books in his chariot and calls a stag from the mountain to draw the chariot.<sup>178</sup> Coemgen says that wherever the stag should lie down under the chariot, that there Berach should build his monastery. Here the stag as well as drawing a chariot finds the site foretold by Patrick for a monastery.

In the *Betha Fhindein*, the monks go into the wood to cut trees for the church but do not allow Findian to go because of their honour for him.<sup>179</sup> The sub-prior asks Findian why he has not gone to the wood, and Findian replies that they need the means to do so. The sub-prior tells him of two stags in a field that Findian should yoke and take into the wood. The stags are constrained by two angels so that they can be yoked and carry wood back to the church. In the life of the Scottish saint, St. Kentigern, Kentigern working at agriculture lacks oxen, but uses wild stags instead.<sup>180</sup> In general, it appears to be the stag that acts as a plough animal or draught beast for the saint; the doe usually providing nourishment in the form of her milk. In other words, the stag and doe act as their tame counterparts.

The deer also appears as an animal-helper performing other tasks for the saint. In the *Life of Cíarán of Clonmacnoise* (from the Book of Lismore), a stag visits Cíarán at the school of Clonard, and the saint would place his book in the stag's antlers.<sup>181</sup> One day on hearing the bell Cíarán rises and the stag goes forth with the book

between its antlers, and although the day was wet, the book open, not a letter was harmed.<sup>182</sup> Following the stag, Cíarán enters Inis Angin and dwells there. The stag is again seen to be the finder of the dwelling of a holy man.

Only within the traditions of hagiography, can the deer be separated from the hunt, acting as a literary motif in its own right. The doe, fawn and stag in the saints' lives take the role of animal-helper. It is in this way that the special nature of the deer and the supernatural powers of the saint are expressed. The deer comes to the saint from the wilderness (i.e. the forest), and the saint performs a miracle under the guidance of God, making the wild serve as the tame. Perhaps the Christian symbolism of the deer is one reason why it is so popular an image within saints' lives as an animal-helper or sanctuary seeker (from hunters and hounds). It is this dual imagery of the deer, expressing secular as well as Christian symbolism, that may explain its popularity as the chosen animal of the hunt upon Pictish and Irish sculpture. As well as the Christian iconography associated with the deer with a classical and universal background, the Celtic literary tradition provides a whole range of other symbolic images associated with the deer.

3. *Chase's role in visions and land-grants:* In Welsh saints' lives, the hunt is often connected with visions or land grants. An animal leading the saint to the site of a monastery develops the theme of the sign of sanctity of the saint. In the *Life of St. David*<sup>183</sup> David's father who has renounced his royal power for a holy life has a dream in which an angelic voice prophesies that the next morning he shall go hunting and killing a stag near a river will find three gifts: the stag, a fish and bees.<sup>184</sup> He is to keep some honeycomb, a portion of the stag and of the fish for a son who will be borne to him and to the monastery of Maucannus. These gifts foretell his life, the stag signifying his power over the Serpent due to the stag's seeking the fountain after depriving the serpent of its

food and is refreshed as in youth as Christ deprived Satan of the human race.

The chase here is an integral part of the events that will lead to the birth of a man who will become a saint. It is also linked to royal power in that David's father has given up regal entitlements in order to seek a holy life. The stag, fish, and bees symbolise David's right of possession and lordship. This is reflected in the early laws in which a man's right to uncultivated land was declared by his right to the honey, fish, and wild animals living upon this land.<sup>185</sup> The portion of the dream detailing the stag's enmity to the serpent shows influence from the tales of the bestiary and *Physiologus*. The stag is portrayed in these tales as an allegory to Christ. The killing of the stag in the dream may represent the sacrifice of Christ and is part of the theme already seen in other saints' lives of the divine victim.

In the *Life of St.Cybi*, King Maelgwn of Gwynedd hunts a she-goat in the mountains which seeks shelter with Cybi.<sup>186</sup> The king demands his prey from the saint and threatens to evict Cybi from the land. The hermit replies this is only in God's power and offers to free the goat if the king sacrifices to God and to him the whole land. Similarly in the *Life of St.Illtud*, King Meirchion is hunting a stag which seeks sanctuary with Illtud.<sup>187</sup> The stag is tamed and the hounds cease their baying outside the hermitage. The king is angered by the hermit's occupation of the land without his permission which he saw as more for hunting. He demands the stag, but impressed by the saint's refusal and that the wild stag had become tame, the king grants the land to Illtud for a monastery of which the saint became abbot. Also in the *Life of St.Cadog*, Gwengarth, fosterson of the king grants to St.Cadog the township of Cadroc for his and the king's soul. Gwengarth had been granted this land by King Morcant for saving his hawk and its prey from an eagle while they were hawking for ducks. The hunt is a catalyst to a grant of land being made

to a saint by a king or person of royalty.

*Summary:*

As we have seen the chase in early Irish and Welsh sources is intimately bound to the theme of kingship, reflecting the pivotal role of monarchy in politics, society and the overall scheme of things.<sup>188</sup>

The hunt motif is used in a formulaic manner within these early sources. For example, in the Níall and Lugaid sovereignty tales the episode of the hunt is when the hero often makes his first appearance. The chase generally takes a form in which a young hero is guided or seduced into a supernatural encounter by the otherworldly being whom he pursues. Often, there is little outside motivation for the hunt as it is an habitual pastime, 'boyhood deed' or training in arms. The chase serves as an introductory motif for the main adventure of the tale and setting for an otherworld adventure to take place.

The hero is lead astray while he hunts by a fantastic deer until he reaches another place usually a forest or mound (*síd*), thereby making a transition from a natural to supernatural world which the wild forces of nature (ie. the quarry) represent. We learn later in the tale that the beast of the chase was sent by an otherworldly being and/or is a transformed otherworld woman intent on luring the hero to her world for one purpose or another. The hunt as a motif not only introduces such an episode but reflects the 'opposites' of the tale, juxtaposing man and the forces of nature, and the natural and supernatural worlds.

The chase is an integral component of this transformation. This is an exploration of the 'divine right' of a pre-destined ruler in which the intended ruler is set apart from his hunting companions during an episode of hunting.<sup>189</sup> The hero is lead astray by his prey so that he is isolated and separated from his familiar notions of reality.<sup>190</sup> This confronts him with a conflict upon which his fate depends leaving him vulnerable to the supernatural forces of the forest.<sup>191</sup>

The hunt episode emphasises the transition of the hero from his untamed youth, concerned with a hunter-warrior's pursuits on the fringes of society to the responsibility of kingship, adulthood and elevated status. In accepting sovereignty he rejects youth, thus the motif is one of many transitions: natural to supernatural, youth to adulthood, and hunter-warrior to king.

A sense of conflict is maintained until the hero's final encounter with the quarry. The quarry, often a magical deer, acts as a lure to draw the hunter from familiar surroundings into unfamiliar territory where a crucial contest takes place with some power or opponent of otherworldly nature, changing his life. The function of the prey is to separate the hero from his companions, "familiar notions of reality and order and procure for him his isolation."<sup>192</sup> The hunter is then able to begin the adventure introduced by the chase.

The deer is generally the quarry pursued in the chase compositions of Early Medieval Pictish and Irish sculpture. As a visual and literary image it can appear as a hind, stag or occasionally, a fawn. Also, as a visual and literary motif, the deer is the principal image linking the chase to imaginative literature, to the Scriptures, to sainthood and to art.<sup>193</sup> The deer is often represented in literary sources as a magical animal; a creature into which man/woman is repeatedly transformed, and is constantly challenging the skill and courage of the huntsman. The deer frequently entices heroes into supernatural realms and encounters with otherworld denizens.

Ideas of kingship in these tales may be influenced by Christian ideals of kingship. The deer is clearly related to ideas of sovereignty and trials of the hero. The deer in early Irish literature, is not obviously a Christian image, but represents ideas complementary to Christian iconography. In conjunction with Christian symbolism associated with the stag, an understanding of what is represented by Pictish and Irish sculptural chase

compositions may be gained.

Hounds, deer and other beasts appearing as part of visual hunt imagery, are economic signifiers as well as being symbols of arcane Christian ideas.<sup>194</sup> Hunting dogs are expensive to maintain and breed, and the hunt itself would require much leisure time to organise and train the hounds, horses and hawks. The chase and the quarry associated with property and land rights has an early tradition in early Irish, Welsh and Northumbrian law. Early Irish and Welsh hagiography also link the chase with land claims and the founding of monasteries. This suggests that the chase and its beasts on Pictish and Irish sculpture and in literary sources may mark property rights or rights associated with hunting. The chase is a statement of the superiority and wealth of the patrons of art over those below them. These images elevated the art of the chase. Hunting was the privileged pastime of the aristocracy and a political statement of wealth and power.



## Chapter 2.1 - Legal Texts and the Chase:

The chase was considered the ideal training for war and privilege of kings and nobles, akin to warfare in the skill and courage it demanded.<sup>1</sup> The depiction of the hunt in visual and literary sources is a statement of social superiority and a reminder of the rights accompanying it.<sup>2</sup> Early Irish and Welsh legal texts provide a practical insight into the chase. These texts illuminate the hunting practices of not only the warrior classes, but those of the general population. Early Welsh law is far more detailed account of the hunt, including it as a vital part of court life. There is sufficient similarity between these legal texts to allow us along with the literary source of the saga texts to gain an approximate idea of the hunting rights and practices in Pictland. The right to hunt presumably depended upon the relative status of the participant as did how he hunted.

Most of the Old Irish law texts originate in the 7th-8th centuries but survive incompletely and corruptly in 14th-16th century manuscripts.<sup>3</sup> Linguistic evidence shows that many of these texts were first written in the 7th-8th centuries (Old Irish)<sup>4</sup> and linguistically most of the glosses on the texts belong to the 9th century (Middle Irish) and accompanied by later commentary (Middle and modern Irish).<sup>5</sup> There is no extant ancient code of law for Scotland, but it is likely that any legal system was influenced by the surrounding Celtic countries, Ireland and Wales.

Early Irish Law is unclear to what extent there is a common or public right to hunt or trap on private property.<sup>6</sup> Depending on the status of the individual, most would have probably been able to take part in hunting or trapping on the common land belonging to the *túath*, tribe or kin or hinterland surrounding a community. As F.Kelly notes *Di Astud Chirt 7 Dligid* includes the "wild animals of every wood" (*fiad cacha feda*) among the prerequisites of the freeman.<sup>7</sup> The extant legal fragment concerning hunting and

trapping suggests that this right was restricted.<sup>8</sup>

The trapping of deer seems to be restricted. It is to be assumed from extant laws that trapping a deer without permission is considered an offence. Though it is an offence to trap or hunt on another's land without permission this is nowhere stated explicitly in the surviving laws. The proportion of the kill retained by the hunter depended upon the rank of the landowner and whether permission was given to trap or not. A general warning must be offered by the trapper before trapping upon common land and he is held responsible for any person or domestic animal killed or injured in his trap.<sup>9</sup> The section of the legal texts referring to the trapping of deer is the *Osbretha* (deer-judgements). This lost text is known only by title or from quotations in glossaries. According to Kelly what are probably its opening words (*diles i nosbrethaib* "free from claim in deer-judgements") and commentary are preserved in the Senchus Mor:Book of Aicill (*Lebar Aicle*).<sup>10</sup> The accompanying commentary may have originally dealt with the trapping of deer by the means of a pitfall or upon a spike.

According to the commentary accompanying the *Osbretha* a trap can be lawful or unlawful, with fines set accordingly.<sup>11</sup> A hunter had to give notice of his trap's location to prevent injury to persons or livestock.<sup>12</sup> Notice appears to mean whether warning of the trap and its location are given so that travellers may avoid injury. There appear to be two methods of trapping, the set-spear (*bir airndil*) or pitfall (*cuithrech*).<sup>13</sup>

Fines are set according to the location of the set-spear or pitfall such as a green,<sup>14</sup> between a green (*faiche*) and a wild-place (*díran*). The term *díran* can also refer to a wood,<sup>15</sup> unshared land (mainly mountainous waste, marsh, remote forest),<sup>16</sup> or a mountain (*slíab*).<sup>17</sup> Penalties depend upon whether notice is given, whether there is a fence or not, whether livestock or human is caused injury and if the hunter is a lawful or unlawful

one.<sup>18</sup> It is safe to have a lawful pitfall in these places when there is an announcement or warning about it. Notice of a pitfall had to be sent to the king and community (*de rí gocus do thúaithe*) and a set-spear/stake.<sup>19</sup>

The hunting rights of the hunter are also described. This implies some ritualization of the chase. There are two traps taken into consideration, those of the lawful (*cuchaire techta*) and those of the unlawful hunter (*cuithig etechta*).<sup>20</sup> The lawful hunter only takes the deer (*fiad*) he nominates or rouses (*gairmes*).<sup>21</sup> One day appears to be the limit, suggesting that the deer was harboured in the early morning and then driven into the trap.

Theft from a hunter's tent (*folach fiann*) is defined in the Law of Distraint.<sup>22</sup> The text states "for robbing a hunter's tent (*folach fiann*), namely, the cooking-tent or hut (*both folachta*), that is, for disclosing (? rifling) the repositories of fians (?)." <sup>23</sup> The *folachta* appears to have the same meaning as *fulacht* which designates an outdoor "cooking-pit or booth". The seventh of honour-price is due to the hunter (honour price is due the three grades of warrior who are not indebted to any or any to them) for an appropriated tree for the hunter's cooking-pit (*fulucht fianachta*) as a hunter commits lawful plundering and it does not deprive one of honour-price to commit lawful depredations.<sup>24</sup> This seems to suggest that a hunter with means of establishing a hunting-camp is of warrior class.

From this text, the hunter appears to have unrestricted freedom upon "unshared or wild land," mountainous areas and wild-places.<sup>25</sup> These are the areas the heroes of the sagas and the Fenian legends hunt. The huntsman may hunt at will but must give adequate public notice (warning) of any trap he sets.<sup>26</sup> That the hunt and trapping of deer was restricted by laws implies that they were an important feature of early Irish society. The deer would have provided provisions as well as sport for the general populace.

Only the hunting of deer by trapping is regulated in

the extant legal texts. Whether the lost portion of the *Osbretha* also regulated hunts of the type characteristic of the visual and literary material, such as the drive or coursing will remain speculative. However, it is implied that deer-trapping is the hunt allowed to those of free status. This is a solitary sport, unlike the chase of the king or noble who coursed or drove game with many attendants.

That wild-places and mountains appear to be unshared land implies, that at this time the forest was not owned, being a great wilderness to be hunted in at one's own risk. The wild animals of every wood could be hunted by all even if the wood were private property as there is a common right to them in all places.<sup>27</sup> This suggests wild beasts could be hunted by persons of any status and that certain prey, like the deer, were not yet the exclusive right of the noble ranks. However, that woods could be owned is also implied. This may suggest that they were used by the owner for his hunting purposes even though all had right to the wild beasts within. One should consider this alongside the use of certain areas by the *fíana* for hunting in the Fenian cycle and heroes in tales such as *Fingal Rónáin* where Máel Fothartaig hunts in the mountainous reaches of the "Cows of Aífe". These areas were free for all to hunt upon but became associated with the notables who favoured these regions as hunting grounds and perhaps even owned the land itself.

The *curée* (hunting term referring to the dividing of a carcass) is an important ritual of the chase, rewarding each his entitled portion along with his hounds. This ritual finds parallel in early tales where heroes vie for the *champion's portion* as in the tale of *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó*. The division of the deer's carcass is referred to in a difficult passage from the early laws.<sup>28</sup> It seems that the "men who make the first striking/kill (get) the carcass" (*fir céd guinnid classach*); "those who flay (get) sides" (*fir fenta lethe*); "dog-men, dogs' owners (get)

haunch" (*fir con ces*); "men with the (butchering) implements (get) neck" (*fir iarn muinél*); "entrails (go to) ? followers at a distance? (*inathar fir fá deoid*); and "liver goes to fian band (*áei la fiallach*).<sup>29</sup>

This passage is referred to as the *First Judgement of Amairgin*, also found in the *Book of Lismore* (fol.153b 2), and refers to the first judgement borne in Ireland.<sup>30</sup> Éber son of Míl who went with his people to hunt on the mountain with Érimón and killed twelve deer. Éber's people tell those of Érimón that they would not get anything of the kill, as they had laboured little. The judgement of Amairgen son of Míl is consulted upon this matter of the division of the spoils of the hunt and is as above. This gives an idea of the ceremony of the chase. The division of the carcass, paralleling hierarchical rights of status within the noble and free classes.

Little is said in extent early Irish legal texts about the hunt in relation to warrior or kingly status. It is clear from saga and legend texts that the chase is a privilege of the warrior and king. This is the chase in the form of a drive or coursing, requiring a retinue of attendants, hounds, horses and a place to prepare the slain prey. A late Old Irish/early Middle Irish legal poem consists of instructions to a king and prerogatives of a ruler.<sup>31</sup> The poem occurs at the end of a tract on status, *Críth Gablach*, compiled around 700.<sup>32</sup> The question of unauthorised stalkings which deserve immunity are to be known by a ruler in his role as lawgiver.<sup>33</sup> Among the prerogatives of a king are "stealthy penetration, stealthy intrusion" (*fothlae, tothlae*)... "overleaping by birds, deer and pet animals".<sup>34</sup> That is, knowledge of laws referring to those things including beasts of the hunt and "unauthorised stalkings".

Early Welsh legal texts, such as the *Laws of Hywel Dda* are much more explicit concerning the royal chase and the officers of the court involved in hunting. Service to the king's hunt, for example, taking care of his hounds and



horses was required for certain elements of society. Likewise, in 12th century Northumbria there was the term *dreng*

was used to refer to those liable for the chase, horse and hound.<sup>35</sup> The *dreng* supervised and kept the lord's horses, hounds and hawks.<sup>36</sup> The typical *dreng* in the 13th century *Bolden Book* concerning the bishop of Durham's *drengs*; fed a hound and a horse and went to the bishop's great chase with two greyhounds.<sup>37</sup> The liability of the *dreng* in 12-13th century Northumbria in all six northern counties was to the maintenance of the lord's horse and hounds.<sup>38</sup> It was an Anglo-Saxon practice to make service in the king's chase a condition of land tenure.<sup>39</sup> This practice is of the type that presumably influenced Northumbrian and Welsh hunting laws. A similar practice may have been observed in Scotland before the 12th century such as David I's grant of Pennick to Dumferline excusing the grantee of various duties including helping in the king's hunt.<sup>40</sup>

It had long been recognised, especially in Northumbria, that duties such as providing and feeding horses and hounds for the king or other nobility, lay with the middle and lower societal ranks.<sup>41</sup> These duties, recorded in a High Medieval context, are based upon pre-Anglian customs, that is, those of Early Medieval Britons or Welsh, especially those of the North.<sup>42</sup> Similar customs could be expected among the Picts of North Britain and Ireland,<sup>43</sup> especially in light of interconnections of art and literature they may have shared with the Britons.

However, Irish legal tracts concerning hunting by trapping illuminate a much earlier stratum of the history of the chase in the Insular milieu, perhaps as early as the 7th or 8th century. Free men had rights of hunting on common and waste land and rights to the wild beasts of the land. Likewise in 9th century Mercia, free men had the rights of the chase in woodland sometimes mentioned with grants of land, as in a charter of the king of Mercia in 822.<sup>44</sup> It is clear from early Irish legal tracts that



there is a close link between land ownership and liability related to hunting. This may have also been the case in Scotland.

There is no hint, however, of the special penalties enforced by the king within a royal hunting reserve as in the forest laws of 11th century England. The introduction of the idea of the royal hunting preserve was probably a Carolingian influence introduced into England by the Normans in the late 11th century. The Norman practice involved established reserves, penalties for offenders in the reserves and control of non-royal forests which were created by royal grant.<sup>45</sup> It is only when the numbers of the prey become dangerously low that the dominant hierarchy takes over and the elite forbid the killing of those beasts to the common people, as happened in the Medieval period when the Laws of Venery were set up.<sup>46</sup> It is only with the Norman conquest that these beasts were protected in royal forests as the privileged hunt of the king and nobility.

There is little of this regimentation of the hunt and hunting grounds in early Irish law. We can see the beginnings of this within early Welsh legal tracts. In the Insular Celtic milieu of Ireland, Wales and Scotland before the 12th century, it is likely that certain areas were favoured for the chase amongst the aristocracy and royal circles but there was not yet an established system of hunting reserves as saga material implies.

In the early Welsh *Laws of Hywel Dda* the worth of various types of dogs according to the station of the owner is listed much as various grades of Irish society were allowed hounds. The worth of a type of hound was based upon age, training and rank of the owner. For example, the king's staghound (*gellgy*) is worth a pound when trained and six score pence when untrained.<sup>47</sup> The king's greyhound (*mylky*) is worth six score pence if skilled and sixty pence if unskilled.<sup>48</sup>

It is in early Welsh law that we see the chase as a privilege associated with the court. As in Ireland, hunting

was permitted to all on common lands, however, it is apparent that the king and his hunting parties had priority over all others. Evidence for intercourse between early Ireland and western Britain from linguistic and literary sources suggests that the inhabitants of western and southern Wales and south-eastern Ireland shared a common culture in the pre-Norman period.<sup>49</sup> It is possible that influences upon hunting customs were exchanged in this manner, as well travelling into northern Wales and Scotland. The lack of hunting iconography on Early Medieval Welsh sculpture is interesting in light of the rich chase imagery in its literature and legal material. We lack most of Old Welsh literature and what survives is of Middle Welsh date in linguistic terms.<sup>50</sup>

The rich tradition of the chase in Wales presumably had technical influence upon Irish and Scottish practices. Contact between England and Wales may explain the similarity of Welsh hunting practices to those of England. Welsh and English sources record English attacks upon Wales, lead by English kings, especially Mercian, in the 8th and 9th centuries and English ealdormen and sheriffs in the 10th and 11th centuries.<sup>51</sup> King Aethelbald in the early 8th century, Cenwulf and Offa in the later 8th century all made incursions in Welsh territory.<sup>52</sup> Alliances were also made with England, for example south Wales accepted protection from king Alfred.<sup>53</sup> The English-Welsh relationship of sustained political conflict and interaction would have provided prime conditions for the interchange of other ideas such as hunting practices. For example, the prevalence of hawking in Welsh legal sources. Scotland is likely to have received hunting influences via Northumbria and its contacts with southern England.

Early Welsh law tracts are known as the *Laws of Hywel Dda*, a king (d.949/50) of Dyfed (c.942) and Wales, excluding the south-east. According to tradition, Hywel Dda summoned the nobles of Wales, important members of the clergy and representatives from each cantref to meet to re-

examine the laws. The meeting is generally accepted to have taken place in 943. These laws are the ultimate foundation of nearly all the legal books produced in Wales between the early 13th and early 16th century and the immediate foundations of those put together in the 12th and early 13th century.<sup>54</sup> However, in all the surviving manuscripts additional material has been added to the core so that any Welsh manuscript contains a good deal of later material than Hywel Dda's period.<sup>55</sup> Great care is then needed before these texts are cited as evidence for 10th century Welsh conditions.<sup>56</sup> This may explain why so many of the laws and commentary concerning the chase are similar to the hunting treatises of the High Middle Ages.

The royal court is described in detail in these laws. The twenty four permanent officers, each with privileges and a specific place at the royal table are described. Officers of higher rank included the *Penkynynt* (Chief-Huntsman) and *Penhebogyt* (Chief Falconer) along with the *Edling* (heir-apparent).<sup>57</sup> We do have some idea that such positions may have existed in early Ireland, such as the references in the *Rennes Dindsenchas* to "master of the hounds" (*concairecht*) to the king<sup>58</sup> and in the *Acallam na Senórach* to Finn as "servant in charge of hounds" (*gilla con*)<sup>59</sup> (both texts attributed to the late 12th century).

The Welsh court was itinerant, moving about to other courts throughout the kingdom. Irish and Pictish court life was likely little different. In Irish saga we often encounter the retinue of the king including poets and druids within great wooden halls. Adomnán's description of the Pictish king, Brude's court in the *Vita Columbae* mentions magicians, wizards and sorcerers as part of the king's retinue.<sup>60</sup> Adomnán also refers to a *guidan plebeus* "free land-holder" who possesses servants and a *geonae primarius cohortes*, a war-leader of some type.<sup>61</sup> Messengers or envoys described as *equites* belonging to Brude's court, distinguished by riding of horses.<sup>62</sup> The early Pictish court appears to have men of rank associated

with it as did the early Welsh and Irish royal courts. However, it is in Welsh laws that officers of the court in charge of hunting and falconry are arranged in a strict hierarchy of rank and status with other court officers.

The Welsh king had a retinue thirty-six horsemen, a bodyguard, servants and musicians according to the *Laws of Hywel Dda*.<sup>63</sup> This recalls Pictish cross-slab hunt scenes in which various horsemen, footmen and musicians participating in the chase. Each officer of the court is entitled to his dogs, horses and hawks. The importance of the chase is clear as hounds and hawks are mentioned as elements of rank. According to the rank of a court officer, the value of his hounds and hawks were prescribed. For example, the Captain of the Household (*Penteulu*), first in the Household, is entitled to hounds and hawks the same value as the king's.<sup>64</sup>

The Chief Huntsman is tenth in the royal court and supervised a group of huntsmen.<sup>65</sup> The Chief Huntsman had various duties. For example, to escort the king during the chase and hunt stags, hinds and wild boar during the seasons when hunting took place. Each huntsman; the staghound hunter, greyhound hunter and Chief Huntsman received a share of the pelts of their prey before the king received his. It appears that huntsmen were defined by what hound they trained and thus, their duties during the chase.

The Chief Huntsman's hounds were of the same value as the king's. The above is all from the *Venedotian Code* said to be the compilation of Jowerth, son of Madog and contains allusions to alterations to the *Laws of Hywel Dda* made by Bleddyn, Prince of North Wales about 1080 and likely of Anglo-Norman influence.<sup>66</sup>

It is apparent from these laws that the chase was a right of the king and his court. There may have been some service required by the king's villains in the maintenance of his huntsmen as is suggested by mention of a progress of the huntsmen with the king's villains in the *Dimetian* or *West Wales Code* (contains alterations made by Rys son of

Grufudd, Prince of that district about 1180).<sup>67</sup> Perhaps this involved something similar to the duties of the Northumbrian *dreng*. The people of the Welsh kingdoms were subject to quartering certain court officers who could at certain times of the year impose themselves such as the Chief Huntsman and his huntsmen. Other officers were also entitled to such a circuit (*cylch*) such the Chief Falconer and his assistants.<sup>68</sup> The Chief of a kindred had to support the hounds of the king, the huntsmen, and falconers once a year.<sup>69</sup>

According to the *Laws of Hywel Dda*, if a person looses his hounds on an animal, and other hounds kill it, the kill belongs to the first hounds, which started it, unless the other hounds belong to the king.<sup>70</sup> It is also not right for any beast to be accredited to the hunter and his hounds unless the hunter is following the beast he started, and has not turned home or abandoned the hunt similar to the Irish laws governing hunting-dogs.<sup>71</sup>

The idea of the right of rank to a kill is illuminated in the *Mabinogi* of *Pwyll*.<sup>72</sup> Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed, goes hunting and his hounds meet another pack in pursuit of a stag. The second pack kills the stag, but Pwyll drives them off and claims the stag. As Charles-Edwards suggests there is probably a "point of law at stake here."<sup>73</sup> The first pack giving chase to a stag has prior claim even if other hounds appear and succeed in the kill, except if the second pack belongs to a king.<sup>74</sup> The principle that the king's chase may over-ride the rights of his subjects when hunting is apparent.<sup>75</sup> The king was entitled to hunt in every place in his country.<sup>76</sup> Although Pwyll may be entitled to the hart as he is sovereign of his kingdom having authority to hunt where he pleases with special rights to the kill.<sup>77</sup> There appears to be some confusion between Arawn and Pwyll as to which law should be applied. Arawn has claim based upon the fact that his hounds brought down the stag.<sup>78</sup>

The following dialogue between Pwyll and Arawn, king



of the land he comes from, becomes an issue of relative rank. We agree with J.Fife that "the etiquette of hunting was surely a matter of common knowledge to the common audience of the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*...even if the exact legal issues involved were not."<sup>79</sup> Here the chase is linked with ideas of status and rank as well as introducing an otherworldly adventure for Pwyll. The issues confronting Pwyll are also found within the *Laws of Hywel Dda*.

The worth assigned to deer and hunting is set out in the *Laws of Hywel Dda* under the "Value of Wild and Tame". The worth of a stag is defined by time of year, the period of its prime (Autumn) being when it is of greatest value.<sup>80</sup> Within this tract, the trespasses of the king's hunting are also described with their consequences. These are very similar to the liability of hounds incited after a beast in early Irish law. If the king's hounds follow a stag and kill it on another's land, the landowner is entitled to the hounds and hart.<sup>81</sup> The owner of the land where the king hunts is entitled to various portions of the carcass depending upon the time the quarry is found and when it is claimed by the huntsmen.<sup>82</sup>

Similar to early Irish law, Welsh legal texts do not appear to define any sense of hunt preserves. What is apparent is that certain areas were known to be the hunting grounds of kings or magnates, an aspect glimpsed in legends and sagas. The *Llandaff Charters* give us the idea that the inhabitants of early Wales did have a concept of the ownership and worth of land. These charters are a detailed corpus of material from the south-east referring to much of the pre-Conquest period.<sup>83</sup> They occur in a large miscellaneous episcopal compilation, *Liber Landavensis*, written for the most part in the 12th century relating to the foundation of Llandaff.<sup>84</sup> The charters record grants of land of estate size, as well as woods, meadows and pasture which must have been a significant element in land use.<sup>85</sup>

At Llansay c.725, the value of a wood is stated, a



grant being made "with pannage and hawking in the wood" (*cum glandini & ancipitre in silva*) which belonged formerly to Dyfrig, to bishop Berthwyn, Llansoy.<sup>86</sup> Clearly hunting rights are an important part of land use for it to be mentioned in conjunction with a grant. That the value of land is often determined on the basis of the worth of hounds and hawks also attests to the importance of the hunt in early Welsh society. The hound, hawk and horse all appear as expensive items. The value of the sale of lands is recorded in the Charters showing the 8th century concept of worth. One and a half unciae (c.750 acres) at Wonastow were sold for a best horse worth twelve cows and a hawk, and a hunting dog and horse each worth three cows.<sup>87</sup>

As we have seen the chase in the early legal texts of Ireland and Wales appears has a formulised and important social context. The chase is associated with those of rank and their privileges. This also appears to be the case within the saga and hagiography traditions. As in saga and sovereignty tales the hunt in Irish and Welsh law is a significant part of the training in arms of the young noble. The practical aspects of hunting are likewise apparent such as setting traps and hunting rights upon the land in Irish law. Hunting rights in both Irish and Welsh law texts are bound to land rights. The Irish hunter is free to hunt on wild or unshared land and in Welsh tracts such as the Llandaff charters hunting rights are part of the value of a portion of land.

## Chapter 2.2 - The Hound's Relation to the Chase Motif in Early Celtic Literary and Legal Sources:

Most chases in Pictish and Irish visual imagery include hounds as do those within early Irish and Welsh literary sources. It is from these sources that we may infer a "native" symbolism for the hound to supplement the little Christian iconographic function it has within the chase as a symbol of evil and persecution. The hound often found accompanies a hero or warrior to battle, as in the *Gododdin*. In some cases, heroes have special associations with a hound such as Cú Chulainn. Like the horse, the hound, especially the hunting dog, was a mark of prestige and wealth, manifesting in itself the qualities admired in a noble man - strength, speed, ferocity, virility and faithfulness. As the hound has little Christian iconographic significance, further understanding of its symbolic intent may be gained from literary sources in which it has an extensive role. The hunting-hound may be discussed according to its role in i) heroic tales and ii) legal texts.

i) *Hunting-hound in heroic tales*: As is apparent from the sculptural and literary sources, there are two main types of hounds used in Early Medieval Ireland and Pictland for hunting. The first, is the lithe greyhound type dog, prized for its speed and coursing ability. This type of hound hunts by sight not by scent, running the quarry down. The other type of dog appears to have been a larger heavier set type, perhaps mastiff-like in appearance. These hounds are perhaps those that appear in saga lore, such as the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* as ferocious guard-dogs. Both types of hound were highly valued animals and often given as gifts or even fought over as in the tale of *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó*. In the Fenian Cycle there is also mention of the use of deer-hounds, and beagles for hunting.

Greyhounds vary considerably in size and coat texture, including very large animals resembling the deer-hound.<sup>1</sup> Its value lay in its speed and ability to seize and pull

down running prey. This is the action we see in the deer and hound motifs of the hunt scenes on Pictish and Irish sculpture. The heavier type of hunting dog, like the "alaunt" described later Medieval hunting treatises is similar to a greyhound but with a broad and short head.<sup>2</sup> In the period at the end of Hadrian's reign, Arrian in his monograph *Cynegeticus*, wrote about Celtic breeds of hounds<sup>3</sup> famous for swiftness.<sup>4</sup> Arrian describes skilled tracking dogs which hunt by scent (*segusions*) and the fast hound that hunts by sight (*vertragi*).<sup>5</sup>

The hound has an established place within early Celtic tradition. In early Irish lore there are many heroes associated with dog-like qualities and appellations such as Cú Chulainn and Cú Roi. Cú Chulainn earns his name by killing the ferocious watchdog owned by the smith Culann. Finn is associated with hounds; Bran and Sceolang, who are actually his transformed nephews. There are many celebrated hounds in early Irish tradition belonging to a hero or warrior of note. The Metrical Dindsenchas anecdote of *Sliab Callan*, lists famous hounds and their owners.<sup>6</sup> In the Death Tales of the Ulster Heroes, the "Death of Celtchar Mac Uthochair", three hounds are found in a cairn.<sup>7</sup> The spotted hound becomes the dog of Mac Da Thó, named Ailbe; the dun hound becomes that of Culann the Smith; and the black hound is Daelchu belonging to Celtchar.

The hound in the protective role as a guard-dog, embodies the martial values of strength, ferocity and fidelity. These are the qualities of the most admired hero and warrior. The hound of Culann is owned by an otherworldly figure, that of the smith Culann. The hound of Mac Da Thó is also an otherworldly figure in his role as a hospitaller and dispenser of peace and plenty.<sup>8</sup> Their hounds can be assumed to have mythical significance as the embodiment of canine and martial virtues of strength, frenzied fierceness, and fidelity.<sup>9</sup> By overcoming the great dog representing martial virtues, Cú Chulainn is able to assume these qualities himself and fulfill its function as the

"aggressive guardian of people and property from outside attack."<sup>10</sup> In *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó*, the slaying of Ailbe by the charioteer, Fer Loga, heightens his prowess and standing to one of a warrior of note, as the hound embodied martial and guardian virtues.<sup>11</sup>

In the *Ulster Cycle*, warriors are also associated with hound imagery. In the tale of *Longes Mac nUislenn* (8th/9th century) the sons of Uisliu are described as being "as swift as hounds (*conaib*)...at hunting (*tafonn*)."<sup>12</sup> The hound is a potent symbol of warrior values in early Irish tradition. This may suggest the reason why the hound is so often described as being in the company of the warrior. The popularity of the hound in equestrian processions and chases in visual imagery may be suggested by this symbolism. The martial symbolism of the hound when considered alongside the military associations of the horse and chase, make the symbolism of kingship an even more powerful secular iconographic interpretation of chase and equestrian processions upon Pictish and Irish sculpture.

Hounds are essential possessions of the warrior and huntsman. They are a symbol of wealth and status. Hunting-dogs are generally kept as a couple; a twosome for hunting. Finn owns the couple named Bran and Sceolang and Máel Fothartaig in *Fingal Rónáin*, Dathlenn and Doílín. Hounds are found as couples in Pictish hunt and equestrian scenes. Hounds are also bestowed as gifts. In *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, Conaire relates to Mac Cecht what he gave Da Derga in the way of the gift Da Derga sought from him.<sup>13</sup> Conaire being a good king gives him thrice nine hounds all white with their silver chains and a hundred race-horses. In the Welsh poem "Satire of Cynan Garwyn son of Brochwael" from the *Book of Taliesin*, Cynan is described as bestowing upon the poet treasure including: "the stout hunting dogs of the domain."<sup>14</sup>

Hunting-dogs often have supernatural associations and qualities. A sequence from the *Acallam na Senórach* describes the discovery by Finn of a marvellous large

multicoloured hound owned by three men in a rath who say they are from Norway.<sup>15</sup> They promise that the dog will provide deer every other night for the *fíana*. This hound also regurgitates gold and silver to be given in payment to the seven men of science of the people of Cithruadh son of Airemh, demand payment for a poem. In *An Agallamh Beag*, three strangers come to Finn accompanied by a dog brighter than snow which is a hunting-dog by day and a flame by night.<sup>16</sup> As well as being a remarkable hunter, the hound has the marvellous quality of turning water into wine or mead. In the Fenian Cycle, we often encounter the motif of hounds of marvellous colour and attributes belonging to three foreign and otherworldly men. The colour of the hound establishes its otherworldly nature as do its specific talents. In the early Welsh tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen* the *Twrch Trwyth* cannot be hunted without fabulous hounds such as *Drudwyn* who can only be held by the leash of Cors hundred-claws and *Aned* and *Aethlem* who always fell their prey.<sup>17</sup>

ii) *Hunting-dogs in legal texts*: The hunting-dog is also mentioned in early Irish and Welsh legal tracts and appears to have been a creature of status performing a task regulated by law.

The usual term for the hunting hound is *mílchú*, which literally means "animal-hound."<sup>18</sup> This type of hound was prized and bred for its speed. The hunting hound is associated with the aristocracy in the early tales and appears in Pictish and Irish sculptural chases. One early law tract states that it is correct for a lord (*flaith*) to have a hunting hound (*mílchú*) and a *gadar*, perhaps a larger type of hunting-dog (such as we encounter on the Rossie Priory cross-slab), that hunts by scent, unlike the *mílchú*, that hunts by sight.<sup>19</sup> It is suggested that the *gadar* tracked the position of the game (the practice of harbouring), and then the *mílchú* was unleashed to hunt it down.<sup>20</sup>

*Gadar* is another Old Irish word for hunting dog,



suggesting that more than one breed was used for hunting in 7th and 8th century Ireland.<sup>21</sup> The *gadar* is distinguished from the *mílchú* within legal sources.<sup>22</sup> The two words can also be used synonymously to mean hound in other sources. For example, a legal reference uses *gadar* and *mílchú* to indicate hounds used for hunting (*tofaind*).<sup>23</sup> The word *mílchú* is also defined as *gadar* in a passage from *O'Davoren's Glossary* beginning, "*Mílchú .i. gadhar...*".<sup>24</sup> However, there is no suggestion as to how these hounds may have differed. In the 8th century text, the *Críth Gablach* the king's weekly routine is said to include a day watching his hounds at hunting.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps a *gadhar* was a type of lurcher, a cross between a greyhound and shepherd-type dog which can learn the habits of its prey and pull its quarry down by seizing its shoulder or neck.<sup>26</sup> This is the type of action we see portrayed by the hounds in our sculptural examples. There was probably a distinction between types of hunting dogs. This is suggested by a passage from *Fingal Rónáin*, in which the King of the Scots is described as having hounds for hares (*coin le [s]-side fri míla maige*), hounds for boars (*coin fri muca*) and hounds for deer (*coin fri haige*).<sup>27</sup>

In a law tract on distraint another Old Irish term for hound is *archocaid* which occurs in a list of types of dog.<sup>28</sup> This type of hound appears to have been used in the hunt of the deer (*aige*).<sup>29</sup> It is defined as a *cú selga* (hound of hunting) by a 9th century glossator on this text<sup>30</sup> (*Arrcoice .i. cú selga*).<sup>31</sup> This hound is used for tracking down robbers and deer-hunting as indicated by later glossators' commentary (about 12th century).<sup>32</sup> This passage occurs with a text where *archocaid* is described as pursuing deer<sup>33</sup> suggesting that this type of hound hunted by scent as it is used for tracking. Perhaps, this type of hound was a type of staghound.<sup>34</sup> The word *archogacht* also appears in the *Milan Glosses*, glossing the word *venatio* (hunting).<sup>35</sup> In *O'Davoren's Glossary*, *archoige* is explained as a hound that kills deer (*cú marbtha aige*).<sup>36</sup>



In a section entitled "Inciting a dog" (*muilliuc con*) in the commentary of the *Lebor Aicle* (Book of Aicill), fines are detailed for inciting a dog to pursue cattle or other beasts and any harm it thereby causes.<sup>37</sup> Fines are set according to the motive of the person(s) inciting the dog. If the dog is a hunting-dog, and the deer singled out for it is caught, the dog is exempt from any fine.<sup>38</sup> The statement, *Mara gabaltaid in cú*, implies that the dog is trained to hunt, *gabaltaid*, literally meaning "a catcher". The hound is not chasing or causing harm through sheer excitement but is doing as it is trained to do, hunt the deer it is set upon. If the hunting dog pursues and catches an animal that is not singled out for its pursuit, the fine is imposed upon the dog and not the man who incited it after the chosen prey.<sup>39</sup> In this passage the man inciting the hound after the prey is referred to as *fer immuillti*, or "inciter" of the dog. This suggests that here we may have a term for the man in charge of the hounds of a hunt, the man who sets the dogs on the prey.

Another passage refers to the responsibility for trained versus untrained dogs. If the hound is a hunter (*mara gabaltaid in cú*) and no beast is singled out for it, or if the hound is not a hunter (*cú nac gabaltaid*) whether an animal is singled out or not, the dog is exempt and the man doing the inciting is liable for the fine.<sup>40</sup> Compensation is to be made for inciting the dog upon cattle of another person.<sup>41</sup> Here the word *gabastar* is used technically to mean to bring down or seize, in the same sense as *gabaltaid*. Similar fines are set out depending on age or if a non-sensible person set the dog after a beast. The responsibility for compensation if the hound is "checked" from pursuing a deer is also outlined.<sup>42</sup>

### Chapter 3 - The Equestrian in Early Celtic Literature:

Early Irish and Welsh literary sources serve to illuminate the symbolism and role of the equestrian upon Pictish and Irish sculpture. Early Irish sources concentrate for a large part on the horse in warfare and racing. The horse is associated with the birth of heroes. It is the mount of warriors, supernatural being and saints. The horse is often described as being given as a gift or taken as part of plunder. Descriptions of horse trappings and what qualities were to be admired in a horse, are another feature of early literary sources. The equine in early Irish and Welsh literary sources is connected with kingship and heroism in various ways. It shall become apparent that the horse is an emblem of kingship. Detailed descriptions of processions of horsemen in early Irish tradition recall such scenes on Pictish and Irish sculpture

The horse appearing upon Irish and Pictish sculpture has the dished-profile, arched neck, tail carriage and long slender legs generally associated with the Arabian type horse. These horses are relatively small in relation to their riders. However, the horses used by the warrior-aristocracy would likely have been larger than the small native type of pony. The horses we see on the sculpture would probably be about 14hh-15hh. This suggests that selective breeding was practised as well as importation of horses. This horse would have had to be strong and large enough to support a warrior, his weapons and the elaborate trappings we find described in saga tradition.

The importation of horses is referred to in early Irish literary sources. Early Irish legal tracts contain numerous references to foreign or British horses, suggesting horses were imported. These horses are usually referred to as *ech bretnach* (British horse), being from overseas or foreign *ech allmuir*.<sup>1</sup> Kelly suggests it is likely that such horses were derived from stock brought to Britain during the period of Roman occupation.<sup>2</sup> It is also likely that horses were imported via Britain from the

Continent during the 8th and 9th centuries, such as the Carolingian Empire. Selective breeding was also practised by the Franks as early as the reign of Charlemagne.<sup>3</sup>

The importation of foreign mares is indicated by the use of the term *gaillit*, a derivative of *gall* (Gaulish, foreign) in reference to a good quality mare.<sup>4</sup> Such mares are taken to be of British origin by the legal glossators.<sup>5</sup> This idea is illuminated in legal passages describing the *gaillit* as *laire bretnacha*.<sup>6</sup>

References to foreign horses also appear in other literary sources. For example, the *Rennes Dindsenchas* anecdote of *Odba*, the grandson of Balleton is taken to the burial site of *Odba* by his "yoke of foreign horses" (*druimm ria gall-echaib rognais*).<sup>7</sup> In *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*,<sup>8</sup> a British horse (*ech Bretnach*) is given as a reward.<sup>9</sup> In the prelude to the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, the *Táin Bó Dartada*, an otherworldly man and woman appear in a dream of *Eochu Bec*, son of *Corpre*, king of *Cliu*. The woman foretells that *Eochu* will have a grand troop about him and "noble foreign horses under" him (*graiġ alaínd allmarda*).<sup>10</sup> The foreign or British horse is clearly of great value associated with men of warrior or kingly status. Reference to a foreign or imported horse occurs in the Welsh romance of the *Lady of the Fountain*. The hero *Owein* is given a fine black gascon horse by his lady.<sup>11</sup>

Various terms describe horses used for different purposes. Race-horses were highly valued having an important role in the games of a king's *óenach* and are distinguished in early law. The term *ech aige* appears to mean a race-horse<sup>12</sup> as does *ech buada*, which literally means a "winning" or valuable horse.<sup>13</sup> A horse-contest or race is termed, *echthress*, in numerous sources.<sup>14</sup> *Ech immrimme* is often translated as a "race-horse", but refers to a "riding-horse."<sup>15</sup> The term *ech slíasta* is also used to denote a riding or saddle-horse.<sup>16</sup> A trained or broken horse is referred to as *ech riata* in *Fled Bricrenn* and *Féilire Óengusso*. *Marc* is also used just to refer to a horse

and its derivative *marcach* is well attested in meaning "horseman."<sup>17</sup> The story of the *Conception of Mongán* (an 8thC saga), mentions a "hack-mare" (*ban-marc*) or pack horse.<sup>18</sup> The term *graig* also occurs in reference to horses in the *Táin Bó Dartada*. In the *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* a pack-horse is referred to as *airech*, *oirech*.<sup>19</sup>

The trappings of horses and horsemen are elaborately described in early Irish tradition. The sumptuous tack of a horse is an important symbol of status. Beautifully wrought tack of precious metal suggests the wealth and prestige of a horseman. Presumably such horsemen were those who rode highly-prized imported horses. For example, the horses promised Eochu Bec in the *Táin Bó Dartada*, appear richly arrayed. The dark horses appear furnished with bridles of gold and silver and the grey horses with silver bits, foot-chains of brass, and whips of white-bronze with ends of gold.<sup>20</sup> The trappings of horses are also described in detail in the Welsh tales of the *Mabinogion*. In the *Dream of Rhonabwy* the luxurious tack of the mounted warriors gathering for battle identifies what retinue they belong to and their relative status.<sup>21</sup>

Likewise, horsemen on Pictish and Irish sculpture often have mounts with trappings indicated in detail. These horses are equipped with bits, bridles, reins and saddle-blankets. Horse tack generally consisted of a bridle, reins and saddle-blanket according to evidence from sculptural and literary representations. Saddle-blankets appear to have been of square or triangular shape in Pictland. Meigle Nos.1,2, 11, Cossans and Aberlemno No.3 provide examples. In Ireland on the Banagher shaft a similar type of blanket is visible. This type of 'saddle' may have been of the Roman type which were thin and flat, without a cantle or raised pommel, which were then covered with elaborate saddle-blankets according to Biddle.<sup>22</sup> This may be the kind seen on the Repton horse and is similar in type to those found on the Kertch dish, Barberini diptych, and some Roman cavalry tombstones as at Cirencester.<sup>23</sup> Only on

later sculpture do saddles with a deep seat, high cantle and pommel appear as in the Bayeux Tapestry, Sockburn equestrians from Durham and a possible example from Govan.

The early British peoples appear to have used cavalry. The use of cavalry as an organised military tactic was unknown in general in Dark Age Britain, but was familiar to the Romans and early Continental Celts as described by Caesar.<sup>24</sup> This is suggested by the armed equestrian processions upon Pictish sculpture and early literary sources. Cavalry were likely maintained for warfare and to form a retinue around persons of high or respected status.

Retinues of horsemen, loosely defined here as "cavalry", are a predominant feature of the elegiac poems of the *Gododdin*. The men of Catraeth are described as being in a battalion with a force of horses with dark blue armour, shields, spears, mail-coats and swords.<sup>25</sup> In one verse, three hundred men, fully armed with their horses go into battle and do not return.<sup>26</sup> In a verse eulogising the hero Merin, bloodstained troops of horses and men confront the men of Gododdin.<sup>27</sup> Individual warriors and heroes are often described as mounted upon a fine steed. For example, Morid, the champion is remembered with his weapons astride a "dapple-grey arching-necked steed."<sup>28</sup> Bleiddig son of Eli is described on the day of combat doing feats of arms astride a white steed.<sup>29</sup>

There are many more examples of battle on horses and heroes associated with horses throughout the *Gododdin*. While various passages imply that horses were ridden or retinues of mounted men participated in battle, other passages imply that a mounted warrior was an isolated individual amongst foot warriors.<sup>30</sup> The North British *Gododdin* is preserved in the *Book of Aneirin* (about 1250).<sup>31</sup> It is reputed that the author Aneirin lived during the 6th century and the original text or exemplar from which it derives may date from the 9th or 10th century.<sup>32</sup> Its nucleus is the decision of Mynyddog, lord of Dineidyn, to send an army to attack an Anglian enemy,



known as Deifr and Brynaich (Deirians and Bernicians) and the subsequent defeat of his forces at Catraeth.<sup>33</sup>

The *Gododdin* is a heroic poem carrying implications of social setting, and a military aristocratic society in which the chief interest of the nobility is warfare and virtues of courage, fierceness and generosity.<sup>34</sup> As Henderson suggests, even though the *Gododdin* is an epic in which situations are poetically heightened, it can illuminate something of the way of life of the period as poetry of this type was a method of making a permanent record of the deeds of heroes.<sup>35</sup>

That horses may have been ridden in battle is also suggested in Irish and Welsh sources. In an entry from the *Annals of Ulster* for AD.1131 there is evidence of horses used in battle. An army was brought by Conchobor ua Briain and the men of Mumu into Mide where they plundered Inis Locha Seimdide and their horsemen (*marcsluagh*) and the horsemen of Connacht met, the latter being defeated.<sup>36</sup> According to *Sanas Cormaic*, the term *marcach* refers to one who has many horses.<sup>37</sup> As well as use in warfare, these equestrian retinues are likely the ones we encounter upon the sculpture of Ireland and Pictland as cavalcades and hunters.

The "Verses of the Warriors' Graves" from the Welsh text, the *Black Book of Caermarthen*, implies that horses are used in battle. This poem consists of memorials of the places of burial of about two hundred warriors connected with the early history of Britain.<sup>38</sup> For example, Owain is described as having ridden "magnificent steeds with sharp spears" (*A goruytaur mawr minrein*).<sup>39</sup> A similar verse commemorating Cynddylan describes the hero as "wearing harness and riding white horses (*meirch*)..."<sup>40</sup> In an Irish poem from the *Book of Leinster*, "A Grave marked with Ogam," the hero Cairbre fights from horseback letting "...fly a fatal throw/from the back of his horse, good in the fray."<sup>41</sup> The poem is attributed to the Fenian, Oisín, telling of the deaths of Oscar, son of Oisín, and Cairbre



at the Battle of Gabhra.<sup>42</sup> Horses are also ridden in combat in the *Mabinogion*. In the *Dream of Rhonabwy* horses are ridden in battle and in *Pwyll Arawn* fights Hafgan on horseback.<sup>43</sup>

Warriors may have simply ridden to battle and this may be what we see on Pictish and Irish sculpture depicting processions of mounted men. However, one must take note of a battle scene on Aberlemno No.2 in which horsemen take part. The tradition of horses and warriors is already part of early British lore and must have become a conventional motif in literature showing influence of North British sources.

Riding and hunting were an integral part of a young man's education. According to an early Irish law tract, the *Cáin Íarraith* (Law of Fosterage Fee) in the *Senchus Mor*, and many hero sagas (ie. the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*) one of the principle features of early Irish society appears to be the practice of fosterage. Children, usually of notables and royalty, were put in charge of other members of the tribe or dynasty for instruction in their early years and were to be maintained according to his rank by the fosterparents.

The son of the a king required a riding-horse and costly garments. He was also to be taught board-games, horsemanship (*branniugecht*), swimming and marksmanship<sup>44</sup> to have horses racing.<sup>45</sup> The father is expected to provide a horse when the lad reached seven years of age.<sup>46</sup> The son of a noble of *aire-déso* rank was also obliged to learn horsemanship, have a horse given to him by his father at the end of seven years and learn *fidchell*, swimming and shooting.<sup>47</sup> However, horses were not given with the sons of the Féini grades, as horsemanship was not taught to them.<sup>48</sup>

Horsemanship as a part of the young noble's education is found in other texts. For example, in the *Sanas Cormaic*, the prerequisites of a king's son<sup>are set out</sup>. Under the entry for *Orc treith* are listed *óenach oirc treith* (a king's son's fair), which includes food and costly raiment, a

horse (*ech*) and chariot (*carpat*) and greyhounds (*mílchón*).<sup>49</sup> The youth of Máel Duin is recounted in the introduction of the *Voyage of Máel Duin*, an ancient story with 9thC origins.<sup>50</sup> Máel Duin "grew up till he was a young warrior and fit to use weapons...In his play he went out with all his comrades, both in throwing ball, and running, and leaping, and putting stones and racing horses (*imrim ech*)."<sup>51</sup> The boyhood activities listed above are those of the young Cú Chulainn. Skill on horseback appears to be one of a noble youth's first feats like the chase. As well as being an element of a young warrior or prince's education, horsemanship is one of the requirements of kingship.

Horse-racing is associated with the assembly (*óenach*) of the king in early Irish sources. The assembly is connected to kingship and dynastic symbolism. It is suggested that the *óenach* was associated with ancient burials, the assembly held in an ancestor's honour, as well as being where the king gave judgements.<sup>52</sup> For example, the *óenach Carmun* in the *Metrical Dindsenchas*, was a burial ground of kings and dear to those of rank.<sup>53</sup> The *óenach* could also be associated with royal residences such as Tara, Emain Macha or Tlachtar, generally held annually.<sup>54</sup> The *óenach*, principally the Feast of Tara, is a primitive fertility rite held by the king and was last held according to the *Annals of Ulster* in AD560 (561) by Diarmait mac Cerbaill.<sup>55</sup> The *Annals of Ulster* also record an *óenach* held by Níall son of Áed when he became king of Tara under AD915 (916)<sup>56</sup> supporting the assembly's link with kingship.

The origins of horse-racing and the *óenach* are offered in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, which describes the various ancient inhabitants of Ireland. One of the Túatha Dé Danann, Lug son of Cían is named as the first to bring "chess-play and ball-play and horse-racing (*echlaisc*) and assembling (*óenach*) into Ireland."<sup>57</sup> These are the activities associated with the youthful noble and hero in

legal and saga texts. Horses and horse-racing are associated with a royal *óenach* in a 12th century account from the *Book of Leinster*. Óisin, Finn and a small band of the *fíana*, visit the court of Fíachu Muillethan, king of Munster. The king celebrates with races at the *Óenach Clochair* and purchases the winning horse as a gift for Finn.<sup>58</sup>

In the tale of the *Headless Phantoms* from the *Duanaire Finn*, the fair of Liffey takes place in Magh Eala of the king.<sup>59</sup> The horses of the *fíana* and those of the Munstermen come there to race. A black horse belonging to Díl son of Da Chreag wins the three chief races of the fair and Fíachra wishes to have this horse as a gift for Finn. The ride of this extraordinarily swift horse introduces Finn and his companions into an adventure of otherworldly nature.<sup>60</sup>

Horses and equestrian sports were associated with the *óenach* in early Irish society and thence, with kingship. A tract concerning horse-racing also occurs in the early legal text of the *Senchus Mor*.<sup>61</sup> This tract refers to the liability of the king if there is a collision between horsemen on his racetrack or green. The horse is also associated with kingship and noble virtues in another fashion as a symbol of prestige and wealth. Horses are given as gifts between notables to mark a special occasion or taken as plunder. The horse is typically of supernatural nature. It was generally believed that horses were in close contact with otherworld power as the great social importance of the animal meant that special attention was focused upon it.<sup>62</sup>

In the *Life of St. Maedoc* (12th century?) as part of the inauguration of the king of Breifne, the king bestows his raiment and horse upon Maedoc's community.<sup>63</sup> The horse and garments would have represented symbols of kingship, wealth and power, as well as providing an expensive gift for the coffers of Maedoc's community. The gift is proof of the king's generosity towards the saint's community.

In the early Middle Irish text of the *Excuse of Gulide's Daughter* (perhaps 11th century), Feidlimid mac Crimthainn, king of Munster, goes on a circuit of his realm and decides to stay a night at the abode of the satirist, Gulide of Áth Lochi.<sup>64</sup> Gulide accepts gifts of gold, silver, horses, bridles and saddles entitled to him for his hospitality.<sup>65</sup> This also symbolises the generosity expected of a king; a virtue admired in early Irish society.

In the tale of *Fingal Rónáin*, Máel Fothartaig rewards his friend Congal his horse, bridle (*sríán*), and garments in return for Congal's aid in discouraging the amorous advances of his father's young wife<sup>66</sup> and in *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* (10th century), Ilann bestows upon the new lord Cano; fifty dark-grey horses, fifty harnesses and fifty copper cauldrons.<sup>67</sup> The colour of the horses is important. Dark-grey, grey or white consistently appears as the colour of otherworldly horses those esteemed by kings and warriors.

Horses are taken as plunder by the army of Conchobor ua Lochlainn from Ulaid under an *Annals of Ulster* entry for AD1130.<sup>68</sup> The AU also record the taking of horses in plunder by the Norsemen from various churches, attesting to the wealth of the religious community. For example, Gothfrith son of Sitriuc with the foreigners of Ath Cliath plundered Cenannas taking three thousand men captive, a great many cattle, horses, gold and silver.<sup>69</sup>

As well as being valued as luxury gifts or plunder, the horse could be a form of tribute. British horses appear in tribute lists, in accounts of royal *tuarastal* (tribute).<sup>70</sup> In the *Rennes Dindsenchas* of *Loch Gabar*, the two steeds of Echu Horsehead, king of Munster, are sent as a sign of submission to the overking of Ireland, Enna Aigneach son of Oengus Turbech of Tara.<sup>71</sup> This theme occurs in the *Lebor Gabála Érenn*. Lug asks for gifts from the sons of Tuirill Bicrenn, so he will not bear them ill-will for slaying his father, Ethliu.<sup>72</sup> The horses, Gainne and Rea

of the king of Sicily, comprise the "wergild" or compensation.<sup>73</sup> These horses are of special nature, being impervious to waves, lightning and wounds.<sup>74</sup>

Horses are also given to secure protection. For example, in *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*,<sup>75</sup> Pichan asks Mac Conglinne for protection against Cathal mac Finguine and the nobles of Munster, and Mac Conglinne asks for a reward in return.<sup>76</sup> Pichan promises the scholar a gold ring and a British steed (*ech Bretnach*). Horses are also included as part of the bride-price in a betrothal. In the *Táin Bó Fraích*,<sup>77</sup> Ailill bestows his daughter upon Froech for a bride-price including three score dark-grey horses (*ech ndubglass*) with bridle-bits of gold (*beilgib oir*).<sup>78</sup> The extraordinary nature of the horses is indicated by their dark-grey colour and ornate bits.

The qualities admired in a horse are also described in early literary sources. For example, horses are promised stakes in a wager between Midir, king of the Síð of Bri Leith, and Eochaid at Tara in *Tochmarc Étaíne* (linguistically of the 9th century).<sup>79</sup> If Eochaid wins, Midir promises him fifty dark-grey steeds (*gabur ndubglas*) "with dappled and blood-red heads, pointed ears, broad-chested, with distended [flared] nostrils, slender limbs, mighty, keen...huge, swift, steady, easily yoked with their fifty enamelled reins."<sup>80</sup> Horses are given as a wedding gift in the Welsh *Mabinogion* tale of *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr*.<sup>81</sup>

In the *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, a description of the qualities of a fine horse occurs. Mane Honey-worded and Mane Unslow watch the approach of Conaire and his retinue to the Hostel. With the gift of far-sight Mane Unslow describes "thrice fifty dark-grey steeds (*gabur ndubglas*). Small-headed are they, red-nosed, pointed, broad-hoofed, big-nosed, red-chested, fat, easily-stopped, easily yoked, foray-nimble horses...with their thrice fifty bridles (*sríán cruannaith*) of red enamel upon them."<sup>82</sup> Excellent training is clearly admired in a horse.



Further descriptions of the qualities of a finely bred horse are found in *Fled Bricrenn*. In one, Findabair describes to her mother, Medb, the host of Ulstermen and their heroes approaching Cruachan. Their horses have speed and swiftness, pricked ears, erect head-carriage, high spirits, bounding pace, fine nostrils, broad foreheads and broad chests.<sup>83</sup> Also, the colour of the horses identify the heroes. Cú Chulainn and Loigaire have grey steeds and Conall Cernach has a roan and a bay. The reddish colouring of the latter horses may suggest an association with warfare.

Horses are often connected with heroes in other ways. The birth of a hero may coincide with the birth of foals. The foal is usually bestowed upon the hero, becoming a faithful companion. This is what happens in association with the birth of Pryderi in the *Mabinogi* of *Pwyll*. These horses are closely linked with the hero as it is apparent that the simultaneous births have a supernatural common cause.<sup>84</sup> The very old introductory tale to the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, *Compert Con Culainn*, is usually held to contain a corrupt version of this motif. Originally, the hero had been born at the same time a mare foaled, the twin foals given to him, becoming his famous chariot steeds, *Líath Macha* and *Dub Saiglenn*.<sup>85</sup> *Líath Macha* and *Dub Saiglenn* are the most famed horses of early Irish tradition. They pull Cú Chulainn's chariot which is driven by the charioteer Loeg, and their birth and death coincide with Cú Chulainn's.<sup>86</sup> *Líath Macha* (Grey of Macha) is associated with water and the goddess Macha. This horse came out of a lake implying that he had been sent from Macha as a gift to her mortal favourite and returns to the water upon his master's death. In *Fled Bricrenn*, Cú Chulainn catches *Líath Macha* at the loch near *Slíab Fuait* and from *Loch Dubh*, the *Dub Saiglenn*.<sup>87</sup> The supernatural character of these horses is established by their birth, colour and aquatic origins.

The *Metrical Dindsenchas* of *Emain Macha* also recounts this type of tale. Macha comes to race the steeds of king



Conchobor, after her husband boasts that she is swifter than the king's horses.<sup>88</sup> Though pregnant Macha races the horses and proves the swifter. Then she gives birth to a boy and girl, from which comes the name of Emain Macha. Macha was an otherwordly woman, suggesting vestiges of horse worship, associated with Epona. That Líath Macha may originally have been a gift of Macha is implied by the otherwordly character of Macha and her identification with the Morrighu in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.<sup>89</sup>

In *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (9th century) she appears as a battle goddess by foretelling war much as the Morrighu is associated with prophesy and battle in the *Táin*.<sup>90</sup> The otherwordly woman bestows upon the mortal the things most desired by warriors in early Irish society, these gifts often including garments, arms, hounds, jewellery and horses.<sup>91</sup> In *Noinden Ulad* (Debility of the Ulster Heroes), Macha is referred to as Macha daughter of Strangeness son of Ocean (Macha ingen Sainrethh mac Imbaith) which connects her with the otherworld under the waves.<sup>92</sup> This is the tale in which Macha races Conchobor's horses, gives birth to twins, and curses the men of Ulster to the same pains she has suffered in her dying breath.

The Welsh *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, contain many references to horses associated with heroes. The many triads devoted to the equine reflect its great popularity, importance and worth to society of that period. The *Trioedd y Meirch* are a distinct group within the triads, listing the names of horses belonging to the traditional heroes of which the names are of a descriptive nature, they have fabulous characteristics, and for the most part are battle-horses although racers and pack-horses are mentioned.<sup>93</sup> The antiquity of these triads is suggested by the confusion in the transmission of the triads in variant manuscript readings as both names of horses and owners differ greatly between various versions of each triad suggesting confusion was already present during oral transmission.<sup>94</sup> The horses of the triads are often named in terms of their colour and

attributes. For example, Thick-Mane (*Mynggrwn*), and Chestnut Long-Neck (*Gwineu Gwdwf Hir*);<sup>95</sup> and the three lively horses, Grey (*Llwyd*), Chestnut Long-Neck, and Roan Cloven-Hoof (*Chethin Carnaulaw*).<sup>96</sup>

Otherwordly horses in the Fenian cycle appear in numerous marvellous forms. In the *Acallam na Senórach*, the horse is associated with water as in earlier sagas. Cáilte tells the story of Cíabhan son of Eochaid Red-Weapon, king of Ulidia and his marvellous voyage.<sup>97</sup> Cíabhan and his companions behold across the great swells of the ocean an *óglaech* mounted upon a dark-grey horse with a golden bridle. The *óglaech* rescues them from a storm and takes them to Manannán's residence upon his horse after securing their fealty and another adventure begins. Marvellous horsemen riding the waves appear in other voyage tales, especially those connected with saints' lives. In the *Immram Brain*,<sup>98</sup> Bran encounters a man driving a chariot upon the sea who is Manannán mac Lir.<sup>99</sup> Also in the *Acallam na Senórach*, Manannán possesses a horse that can travel over sea and land and often appears riding across the waves.<sup>100</sup> Manannán is generally associated with the sea and with horses throughout Irish literature.

As well as being the faithful companion of the hero, the horse appears as an animal helper in early Irish and Welsh hagiography. Horses are mounts for the saints, providing a means of transportation. Perhaps it is this we see in the Pictish sculptural equestrian processions of unarmed men. For example, in the *Life of St. Maedoc of Ferns*, Maedoc and his disciples are on horseback as they face an apparently unpassable estuary.<sup>101</sup> Maedoc instructs them to let the horses go forward of their own accord and the horses go into the sea without wetting their hooves.<sup>102</sup> The horse's association with water is maintained as part of a miracle performed by a saint. As in the hero tales, the horse of the saints' life is of extraordinary nature and colour.

Horses are given as gifts and fees in saints' lives.

In *Betha Shenain*, the king of Raithlenn, Lugaid demands taxes from Senan who refuses to be under tribute to an earthly king.<sup>103</sup> The king sends his race-horse (*each mbuadha*) to Senan to be fed on corn but the horse drowns whilst being washed. Here we may find a glimpse of the billeting of the king's horses on others within their domain.

In the *Life of St. Maedoc* part of the baptism fee given by Aed Fin to Maedoc includes, the horse and robes of every king and queen, and a foal (*serrach*) from every stud (*groigh*).<sup>104</sup> In the *Life of St. Cadog*, Cadog restores the sight of king Rhun and his servants.<sup>105</sup> In return the king promises Cadog that anyone infringing his refuge shall be excommunicate, and gives to the saint his best stallion with all its trappings, and his three chief weapons (shield, spear and sword).

In Adomnán's *Life of Columba*, the horse serves as a helper to the saint as well as a faithful companion. While Columba rests on returning to his monastery, a white horse meets him who used to carry the milk-vessels between the byre and monastery.<sup>106</sup> The horse lays its head on Columba's bosom and knowing that its master near his time of death begins to lament crying tears. The horse is a symbol of death as in some of the hero tales such as *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* and like Cú Chulainn's horse weeps when it knows of its master's death.<sup>107</sup>

Messengers astride unusually coloured carrying important news often connected with death are encountered in various Irish tales and hagiography. For example, in another episode of the *Life of Columba*, the poet Dallan wishes to compose Columba's eulogy and asks when he shall know of the saint's demise.<sup>108</sup> Columba tells him that a rider (*marcach*) on a piebald horse (*eich alaid/aluidh*) shall tell Dallan of his death.<sup>109</sup>

In *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, three red horsemen foretell the doom of king Conaire and in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, a red horse drawing a red prophetess in her

chariot presages war and destruction. McCone draws parallels with the apocalyptic horsemen of the bible who also ride strikingly coloured horses.<sup>110</sup> It seems unlikely that the monastic recorders of these tales were uninfluenced by biblical symbolism.<sup>111</sup> The horseman then can be a messenger of fate.

The horse is further connected with biblical imagery in Irish sources. In the Old Irish poems preserved in a manuscript from the Monastery of St. Paul in Carinthia (brought by Irish monks from the monastery at Augia Dives [Reichenau] which was frequented by Irish monks in the 8th and 9th centuries (MS.Cod.S.Pauli, No.lxxxiv), the imagery of the horse is used to explain the virtues of Christ.<sup>112</sup> St.Molling converses with the Devil and describes the virtues of Christ in this manner: "He is a race-horse (*ech buada*) over a smooth plain,/(The) man who strives for (the) kingdom of great God,/He is a chariot that is seen under a king,/Which wins a prize from bridles of gold (*ahallaib oir*)."<sup>113</sup> Here the horse becomes a symbol of Christ, victory, and kingship (i.e. chariot of the king - Christ as that foundation supporting the king and the qualities represented by the chariot as suggested in the *Audacht Morainn*)<sup>114</sup> - an imagery often associated with the horse in Early Medieval art. The horse drawn vehicle of kings and heroes, the chariot was likely also used by churchmen of status.

The horse in the Celtic milieu has a long tradition ultimately derived from ancient cultic practices. Manifestations of "horse-worship" may still be found in early Insular Celtic literary tradition. In Celtic Gaul the horse was associated with war and the Gaulish equivalent of Mars (the "rider-god"), also known in Britain. The goddess Epona, was the most important horse deity in Gaul, her cult spreading widely during the Roman period when it was probably introduced into Britain.

Goddesses connected with horses or with equine attributes are well-attested in Insular Celtic mythology

such as Macha or Rhiannon. Rhiannon, familiar from the Welsh tales of the *Mabinogion* as the otherworldly consort of Pwyll, has close equine affinities. In *Pwyll* she makes her first appearance on a magical horse that out-paces the horses of her pursuers. Her son Pryderi is born in association with a foal. Her punishment for supposedly killing her son is to act as a horse and take visitors to court on her back. In *Manawydan son of Llŷr* she is made to wear an ass' collar as well as practising the art of saddlery for a time. The name Rhiannon means "Rigantona" or "Great Queen" associating her with mother goddess deities. Rhiannon's appearance on horseback is reminiscent of representations of Epona in Gallo-Roman and Romano-British sculpture. Epona was associated with ideas of fecundity, birth and war. Dedications are found to Epona as far north as the Antonine Wall (an altar at Auchendavie).<sup>115</sup>

There is also evidence of the horse connected with a male Celtic deity. Small votive statuettes of mounted warriors may suggest this.<sup>116</sup> T.F.O'Rahilly suggests that the mythical and personal names, Eochu, Eochaid are derived from *ech*, which originally meant "horseman" and were originally appellations of an Otherworld deity.<sup>117</sup> The name Eochaid is also given to the Dagda in *Tochmarc Étaíne*, connecting him with the tradition of the rider god (ie. Thracian hermes, Odinn in Norse mythology).<sup>118</sup> The name Eochu may represent an older, non-human image of Manannán, who is associated with horses and the sea in early Irish tradition.<sup>119</sup> These associations link horses and riders with the male aspects of war, protection and kingship and female aspects of fertility and prosperity already expressed within the chase motif.

*Summary:* As we have seen the equestrian and horse are associated with kingship and heroism like the chase. Horsemanship is an essential part of the training of the young hero and the birth of heroes often coincides with that of foals such as Pryderi and Cú Chulainn. The feats of horseman in battle or in procession are integral parts of

texts such as the *Gododdin* or *Fled Bricrenn*. Like the deer, the horse appears to be linked to water in early Celtic tradition. For example, Cú Chulainn's horses appear from pools and the horses of saints can travel upon water as well as land. The horse also appears as a symbol of fidelity as a loyal companion of heroes and saints. Horsemanship and horses are obvious symbols of wealth and power in many of the tales discussed above.



### Chapter 3.1 - Legal Texts and the Equestrian:

Many of the references to horses and riding appear in an early Irish legal compilation known as the *Senchus Mar*. The text is hardly be earlier than 700AD, being replete with biblical quotations and allusions.<sup>1</sup> The "sacrosanctity of the *Senchus Mar* resided in the fact that it was held to be God's law as promulgated by his apostle Patrick."<sup>2</sup> The text is mostly Old Irish, being no later than the 9th century but may well be 8th century, archaic forms suggesting that the compiler may have drawn from older material.<sup>3</sup>

The *Senchus Mar* deals with the liability of humans. The owner of an animal is held responsible for any wanderings or injuries caused by his beasts. The plaintiff must go to the owner's land and pick out the animal that caused harm by containing the beast or making a cast over its head in a symbolic action.<sup>4</sup> There is a proper method of distraining any animal, including horses, in human ownership for offenses committed. Horses (*echaib*) are to be kept in a paddock.<sup>5</sup> This is the law of distraint (*athgabál*) and forms the largest tract in the *Senchus Mor*.<sup>6</sup> When seized the animal was liable to a "stay" (*anadh*), a period, varied according to certain rules, during which the debtor received back the distraint (beast) and retained it, the creditor having lieu on it. Horses had a stay of five days.<sup>7</sup>

A *séd* of one day's stay is prescribed for the unlawful riding of a riding-horse (*n-imrim ech .i. slíastai*).<sup>8</sup> This may be a reference to the *Cáin Domnaig* (Law of Sunday) in which horse-riding is disallowed on Sundays. A distraint of three days stay and a fine is given for working a valuable horse (*foimrim eich buada*).<sup>9</sup> There is a rule of one day's stay for a race-horse (*ech fri aige*) and keeping a stallion for mares (*echecullach for eochu*).<sup>10</sup> The items named in this section also include those necessary for an *óenach* such as weapons for battle, race-horses and food tribute.<sup>11</sup>

The tract, *Críth Gablach* (8th century), within the *Senchus Mor*, deals with the various ranks recognised within early Irish society and their rights or privileges. According to the *Críth Gablach*, there are seven occupations in the law of a king; Sunday for drinking ale; Monday for judgement, for the adjustment of the people; Tuesday at *fidchell* (a strategic board game); Wednesday seeing greyhounds hunting (*toifann*); Thursday at marriage duties; Friday at horse-racing (*rethaibh ech*); and Saturday at giving judgements.<sup>12</sup> The privileges of a king not only include horse-racing which we have seen to be connected with kingship at the royal *óenach*, but the hunt with greyhounds. Horse-racing, hunting and playing *fidchell* are also amongst the skills taught noble fosterlings. Also, as we have seen, horses and hounds are often bestowed by a king or noble on a son or fosterson. Horsemanship, hunting skills and games such as *fidchell* are also practised by heroes, like Cú Chulainn during their youth - all part of the militaristic training required of the young noble and development of his mind.

Societal status is indicated by the quality of horse and trappings allowed by law to certain ranks in the *Críth Gablach*. The nobleman (i.e. chief) is allowed to have pet animals such as a deer-hound, horses and a lap-dog for his wife.<sup>13</sup> A chief of *aire-déso* rank is allowed a riding or saddle horse (*eich slíasta*) becoming his status, with a silver bridle (*sríán arggait*) as well as four horses with green bridles (*ngals sríanaib*).<sup>14</sup> A chief of *aire tuisi* rank is allowed 12 bridle-horses (*echsríán*), a golden bridle (*sríán noir*), a silver bridle (*alaili arggait*), a greyhound (*mílchú*), lapdog (*orcca*) for his wife among other beasts.<sup>15</sup> The mention of the greyhound also suggests the privilege to hunt in the royal manner, to course or drive. An *aire forgaill* chief is also privileged to have bridle-horses (*echsrein*).<sup>16</sup>

The lesser rank of *óg-aire* is allowed to own a horse for work or riding (*capul itir foghnum ocus imrim*).<sup>17</sup> A

man of the lesser *bóaire* rank (a "stock or cow master" of plebian rather than noble rank, that is he belongs to the *grad fene* as opposed to the noble rank of the *grad flatha*<sup>18</sup> is allowed a saddle-horse (*each slíasta*), and an enamelled bridle (*sríán cruain*).<sup>19</sup> At the entry beginning *Bóaire feabhsa cidh ara neipinar...* are listed *capal foghnamha* (saddle or work horse?: lit. a horse of use or service) and *ech immrime* (riding-horse; here I have trans. *immrime* in reference to its meaning to ride about/around although it can also be used to refer to a race horse).<sup>20</sup>

Early Irish society in the *Críth Gablach* is separated into those of noble and those of plebian rank, the free and unfree each with their individual privileges and rights. From the examples given here we can see that the type of horse and bridle prescribed for noble and common ranks were different, and in this manner marked the privilege of respective ranks.

According to Kelly there are two main types of horses to be distinguished in early Irish legal sources.<sup>21</sup> The *Críth Gablach* states that a farmer of *bóaire* status may own a work-pony (*capall fognamo*) and a riding or saddle horse (*ech imrime*).<sup>22</sup> This suggests that there was a distinction between work animals and more prestigious riding horses. The work pony was probably of the small native stock, hardy and strong, perhaps similar to small British breeds such as the Shetland. The riding horse would have been a larger and faster breed and as we have seen can be described as being of imported origin.

The noble ranks are entitled to bridle or saddle-horses (*ech sríán/ech slíasta*) whilst the common ranks could own work or riding horses (*capal foghnamha*). The word *ech* (horse) is used as a generic term to describe all types of horses.<sup>23</sup> *Ech* generally refers to a saddle or chariot type horse as distinct from a work horse, *capall*. *Cullach* is the term used to denote a stallion in legal tracts<sup>24</sup> and glossaries. We also find the word *lair* (mare) and *serrach* (foal). The terms *capall* (from Latin *capillus*) and

*pell* also occur in the *Sanas Cormaic*.<sup>25</sup> In the *Forus Focal*, a metrical glossary in the Book of Leinster, the terms *gabhar* and *mairc* appear along with *peall*.<sup>26</sup> According to one legal text, the difference between the terms *marc* and *ech* is that the former is female and the latter male (*eich .i. firenna, mairc lathracha*) although a *marc* can refer to mares also.<sup>27</sup> In glosses on the legal passage, *ech* is taken to refer to the male and *marc* to the female horse.<sup>28</sup>

The ornament of the bridle also indicates status. For example, gold and silver bridles are allowed those of noble rank whilst the commoner has an enamelled bridle. As we have previously witnessed in saga and mythological material, the adornment of the bridle is an important part of the description of horses associated with heroes or those given as gifts.

There is also some suggestion of 'officers' or positions associated with the court/household of a noble related to the keeping of horses. The Law of Distraint, mentions that there is one-third honour-price for a groom (*gilla*) with wages as well, who is always in his master's household, brings the horses out and holds them outside (presumably for his lord to mount?); and one-seventh for a groom without fixed wages.<sup>29</sup>

The worth of a horse is also suggested. For example the horse is divided into a third for the body, a third for its expectation, and a third for its work. A foal (*serrach*) is worth one-twelfth of its dam.<sup>30</sup> The worth of a mare (*lair*) is tripartite like that of the horse, the final third being her foal and work.<sup>31</sup> Whale bones are mentioned as having one day's stay in that they are necessary for the making of saddle trees (*clar sadall*).<sup>32</sup> This suggests that some type of saddle was used for riding, perhaps along the lines of the type suggested by Biddle.<sup>33</sup> However, the language may suggest a later addition to the manuscript of the law tract.

Horses appear to play a role in the possession of land

according to early Irish law. In the *Breatha Comaithcesa*, *fothla* (trespass) is defined as a party of people unharnessing their horses on a neighbour's land, and inquiring where they have done so. If told to leave by the land's owner and they do not comply, they must pay for the trespass of their horses. If the owner sees the horses held by their bridles and does not question them, and the party is ignorant of the land, the owner pays the trespass.<sup>34</sup> *Tothla* trespass, is described as an unknown party unyoking their horses on land that they understand to be available. The owner of the land pays for the trespass as if it were his own cattle that committed the offence.<sup>35</sup>

In the *Din Techtugad*, a noble tribes' possession of land is secured by the work of their horses. Notice of possession is given by placing two horses in hand (by the bridle) with a witness on the land. If not responded to, the claimant repeats the action with four horses and two witnesses, then eight horses and so on until possession is acknowledged.<sup>36</sup> This sort of practice is encountered in *Bethu Phátraic*.<sup>37</sup> St. Patrick is given land for a church by the wealthy Dáire. Two horses of Dáire are brought to graze one day in that place. The saint is angered and kills the horses. Dáire orders his men to kill the cleric but is overcome with illness. He repents upon his wife's instructions and Patrick revives him and his horses. In *Betha Finnhua Bri Gobonn*, Findchua guards his master Comgall's meadow. The king of Ulaid comes with his army and puts his horses into the meadow.<sup>38</sup> Findchua drives the horses away thrice and finally he curses them, turning them into stone. These references appear to be to the illegal entry and possession of land.

The legal tract known as the *Cáin Domnaig* (Law of Sunday), restricts horse-riding. *Cáin Domnaig* lists activities prohibited on Sunday, describing the penalties and legal proceedings associated with any violations. Its language suggests that it was composed in the first half of the 8th century although mention of Patrick and the Norse



suggests that it belongs to the late 8th century before the Norse invasion towards the end of the 8th century.<sup>39</sup> According to a section of the "Epistle of Jesus concerning Sunday" horse-driving, racing and riding are forbidden on Sunday.<sup>40</sup> Great penance is required for ignoring this or one's soul would not obtain Heaven. In the same section, whatever horse is ridden on a Sunday, is "a horse of fire (*ech tened*) in the fork of its rider (*marcaig*) in hell."<sup>41</sup> Whoever rides his horse on Sunday forfeits his horse and clothes, and horse-driving and racing on Sunday is accorded a fine of a third of an ounce of silver.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps this restriction upon riding reflects the conflict between the Church and what it saw as the excesses of the nobility - hunting and riding. This is apparent in the hunt motif of the king as repentant hunter who bestows land upon a saint.

While reference does occur to 'officers' of a royal retinue associated with horses and their care, such as the *gilla* and the charioteer (Cú Chulainn has a charioteer, Loeg; and in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, there is a room in which wait the "equaries") in early Irish tradition, the early Welsh *Laws of Hywel Dda* are more explicit on this subject. We have noted previously the term *gilla glomair* (horse-boy) from the commentary in an early law tract.<sup>43</sup> The term *echaire* (horse-keeper, groom) occurs in various Irish sources.<sup>44</sup> The *Laws of Hywel Dda* detail a groom's status and duties in the court. The Chief Groom (*Pengwastraud*), held sixth position in a Welsh king's court and had various duties related to the keeping of horses.<sup>45</sup> The queen also had a Chief Groom (*Pen Gwastraut e Urenhynes*), who was ranked third in the queen's household and had similar entitlements.<sup>46</sup> Officers of the court also included the Groom of the Rein (*Gwastraut Awvyn ay Swyd*), who is first of eleven officers including the porter, watchman, smith and woodman.<sup>47</sup>

The king's retinue according to the *Laws of Hywel Dda*, includes thirty-six horsemen (*marchokaet*) made up of twenty four officers, and twelve *gwestais*, as well as his



minstrels, youths and almsmen.<sup>48</sup> This description of a Welsh king's retinue is reminiscent of the cavalcades of horsemen on Pictish sculpture hunting with their footmen and musicians such as the Hilton of Cadboll stone. The king was not to go out of the country without his host except once a year and they had to attend the king in his own dominions whenever he pleased.<sup>49</sup> In a tract called "The Law of the Women" (*keureyth e guraged*), one of the three exclusive rights of a man are his horse and arms.<sup>50</sup> Here the horse and arms are included together as one item, marking the horse's association with war.

*Summary:* According to the early legal texts of Ireland and Wales the use of the horse was widespread with horses used for various tasks. That the horse is considered a mark of wealth and status is suggested by the association of type of horse and trappings allowed each rank within the legal texts. This idea is emphasised by the special place accorded foreign or British horses within the Irish legal tracts. The horse also appears to play a role in the making of land-grants or taking possession of land as the hunt appears to do. The restriction of riding on Sundays in an Irish text suggests that like the chase riding has a contradictory relationship to the Church. Horses and their trappings may have represented the luxury of the nobility as the hunt may have to churchmen.

## Chapter 4 - Summary Statement:

Throughout Part Two we have endeavoured to establish how the native tradition of saga, hagiography and legal texts may heighten our understanding of the chase and the equestrian motifs within Pictish and Irish sculpture. Although the lack of an extent Pictish literature is problematic, we hope to have established sufficient reason to consider Irish and Welsh literary tradition as representative of what Pictish literature may once have been.

As we have seen, Early Medieval Celtic literary tradition contributes mainly to our understanding of the secular importance of our motifs. However, it is apparent that this is a symbolism which shares themes with the Christian symbolism as discussed in Part One. In this sense, we can begin to understand how the Christian and the secular symbolism of victory and sovereignty can be represented by a single motif. the hunt and the equestrian can be understood as having a multivalency of symbolic meaning.

Within Early Medieval Celtic tradition we have seen that there is a common literary inheritance of themes and in some cases characters. It has been from this aspect of a Celtic inheritance that we have suggested that Pictish literature and artistic symbolism shared. Likewise, themes are shared on a more international level within the Christian symbolism of the hunt and the equestrian motifs of Pictish and Irish sculpture. One of the major themes of hunt and equestrian symbolism in Celtic literary tradition and Christian iconography has been that of victory and salvation. The symbolism of victory is a statement of power.

The triumph of the heroic huntsman or king in the chase or as a mounted warrior (i.e. Níall, Finn, Cú Chulainn) is paralleled by the victory of the equestrian notable of Christian imagery or of Christ as represented by hunt imagery. The military aspects of hunting and riding in

both Celtic and Christian traditions emphasise this statement of power. This in turn is a link to the patronage of the sculpture with which we are concerned.

The symbolic link to the heroic feats of great heroes and kings suggested by the use of the hunt and the equestrian motifs within Celtic literary tradition may have reflected upon the need for the portrayal of a powerful and protective aristocracy. By using motifs such as the chase and the equestrian which also had a potent and complementary Christian symbolism, which portray a ritual of aristocratic life that was also an essential part of the pursuits of national heroes and celebrated kings within native literary tradition a symbolism of victory and socio-political power was portrayed.

That the practical elements of hunting and riding are also described within Early Medieval Celtic literature suggests that these pursuits were an important and respected part of aristocratic life. Hunting and riding have appeared as marks of wealth within saga and legal texts. Hunting especially, seems to be in the process of becoming the highly ceremonial and ritualised pastime that it was to become in the High Middle Ages. The attention the description of the hunt in Fenian tales and of the trappings of horsemanship within early Irish tradition emphasises the importance attached to hunting and riding and of their respective symbolism.

In the following section Part Three, we will endeavour to see how the suggested ambivalence and multivalency of the chase and the equestrian motifs effects our symbolic interpretation of Pictish and Irish sculpture. The Christian and Celtic symbolic meanings suggested in Parts One and two should be taken into consideration as we take a closer look at the chase and the equestrian motifs upon the sculpture of Pictland and Ireland.

### PART THREE - Iconographic Analysis of Pictish and Irish Hunt and Equestrian Motifs:

#### Chapter 1 - Introduction:

This section shall concern the iconographical interpretation of hunt and equestrian motifs as they appear in context upon the Pictish and Irish monuments under discussion. In our approach to the original meaning of chase and equestrian motifs upon Pictish and Irish sculpture we shall consider the universally accepted Christian symbolism as discussed in Part One and secular imagery as examined in Part Two that might be accorded these images. For analytic purposes I have divided the sculptural material into iconographical groupings.

The relevant monuments may be divided into iconographical groupings in which the respective motifs play a similar role within the iconographical scheme of the sculpture. In order to consider the iconography of these motifs I have classified the relevant monuments into groups exhibiting common features and associations. Such an analysis can aid in establishing a relative chronology or stage of development that each motif may represent. Also, it can help us to understand where a motif may have first been used, its evolution in form, and how it spread to other areas. Common features may also serve to indicate areas in which schools of sculpture may have existed - differences in characteristics suggesting copying or later dating.

The chase motif bearing monuments are classified as follows:

- i) "David" iconographical group - those chase and equestrian images associated with Davidic imagery;
- ii) stag chases in Ireland;
- iii) falconry scenes;
- iv) chases without direct Christian association - those hunts without direct Christian association;
- v) hart and hound motifs.

The equestrian motifs may be grouped as follows:

- i) Rossie Priory group - cross-slabs with similar compositions of horsemen placed beside and within the cross;
- ii) Meikle processions;
- iii) equestrians placed in association with the cross;
- iv) equestrian figures associated with the Life of Christ in Ireland;
- v) equestrian images without direct Christian association.

These groups illustrate the ambivalent interplay of Christian and secular symbolism within a single motival composition. Some groups demonstrate a more obvious Christian meaning than others, while other groups demonstrate a more ambivalent attitude toward symbolic interpretation.

The equestrian and the chase motifs show a remarkable degree of stylisation. The term stylisation here indicates the stereotyped character of the motifs under discussion. This stylisation indicates a symbolic function made at once recognizable through the repetition of form, that is, the features that enable these motifs to be grouped according to type. The equestrian and hunt motifs have a mutual repertoire, although each monument is individual in composition, which is repeated to express an iconographical message whether Christian, secular, or both.

The development of both the equestrian and chase motif follow the same general pattern. The earlier monuments exhibit the finer examples of both motifs. The features which characterise these motifs then gradually "degenerate" from an elegant equine form (ie. Aberlemno No.3, Meikle) or elaborate chase scene (ie. Hilton of Cadboll, Aberlemno No.3) becoming exaggerated or misunderstood in later examples whether through distance, time, or copying of models. As figure subjects became flattened and degenerate losing their coherence and intelligibility through stylisation and mannerism, many of these motifs lost their significance.

The earlier monuments are also characterised by a low,



generally quite flat relief carving technique, high relief "comes as a climax"<sup>1</sup> (ie. St. Andrews sarcophagus), and then degenerates again to low, flat relief. Irish cross sculpture follows a similar pattern. The focus here however, is upon the decline of the equestrian and hunt motif. Each motif can be grouped according to type and within that type, the nature of the changes noted.

The chase composition consists of scenes in which mounted and in some cases foot hunters pursue deer accompanied by hounds. I have referred to the hunt as a *composition* as in all cases it is made up of the stereotyped figures and arrangements that characterise the equestrian motif and the equestrian and hounds motif. These separate motifs are repeated to form a hunt scene in which the added element of the deer and hound is a significant factor. The horsemen, horsemen and hounds, and deer and hound groups making up the hunt are of the same stereotyped form as when they appear on their own. This forms a composition that taken as a whole can be considered to function as a single motif iconographically.

These chases are rough 'narratives' in that they generally depict one of the most dramatic episodes in a hunt - the pursuit of the prey. The repetition of the same type of equestrian for the hunt being a way of emphasising the status of who hunted in society (indicate superior status). It appears that the sculptors simply repeated an established formula for horsemen, hounds, and deer- whether using a pattern book or not- the elements of the compositions are immediately recognisable, as images of secular and Christian importance. The repetition of these forms as a type suggest that the hunt scene, along with the equestrian was a product of a relatively short period of time and perhaps confined to certain workshops, schools or regions, as the majority of these representations are found in Angus.

Later hunts tend to show the same degenerative features as the equestrian, depict deer with antlers, and



are given less space on the reverse of the cross-slab or cross. Pictish and Irish sculpture is amongst the earliest Insular sculpture to portray complex hunting and riding scenes.

The hunt motif can be divided into types or groups according to its composition. There are five types of chase:

i) 'simple' hunt motif, which consists of a single horseman and a single deer and hound motif (ie. Monifieth No.3, Inchbrayock No.1, Banagher shaft);

ii) 'developed' or 'expanded' hunt motif, which consists of more than one horseman, and usually more than one deer and hound group (ie. Scoonie, Largo, Elgin Cathedral);

iii) 'elaborate' hunt motif, include additional elements to the developed type such as musicians, footmen (ie. Hilton of Cadboll)

iv) foot chase, in which a hunter on foot pursues various beasts with his hound (ie. Eassie).

v) archery hunts, in which a crossbowman stalks a menagerie of beasts (ie. St.Vigeans No.1, Shandwick, Glenferness).

Within the first two types of chase, the deer and hound group is an important element. The developed hunt motif is the most elaborate of Pictish hunt motif types and the majority of the examples belong to Class II. I have referred to these hunt scenes as developed as they are the most narrative in conception, the most detailed and complex. It is more expansive than the simple type of hunt, including additional elements while retaining the stereotypical formula of the chase motif.

The simple hunt is a pared down version of the developed chase - a single deer, hound, and horseman. The majority of Irish cross equestrian chases belong in this group while a few examples include men on foot chasing various beasts similar to Pictish archery scenes. The majority of these chases are of a sequence of monuments generally dated to the 9th and 10th centuries in both Pictish and Irish contexts.

The developed hunt motif includes variations of the deer and hound motif, the horsemen and hounds, horsemen and occasionally armed footmen, musicians or a menagerie of

different creatures. There is a group of developed hunts that can be termed elaborate in that within the rich tapestry of the chase, additional elements such as musicians and foot warriors are included in the composition (ie. St.Andrews, Hilton of Cadboll).

The developed hunt group consists of those monuments on which more than one horseman is involved, one or more deer and hound images or deer, and a hound and horseman group. What this type of chase motif lacks is any additional elements such as hunts on foot, footmen or musicians. This type of chase is generally found on cross-slabs that appear to be of a later date than the elaborate examples. It appears that the chase motif becomes simpler as its use evolves. The hunts on foot are of similar and simple composition. They consist of a tall elongated huntsmen pursuing with his hounds deer or lions in Pictish contexts. Huntsmen on foot on Irish sculpture are more squat and usually confront a menagerie of beasts.

The crossbow stalker will not be dealt with within the context of this discussion. We believe that these compositions are not chases in the sense discussed her. That is, a hunt involving the chase of the deer (occasionally a lion) by force -pursued on horseback or on foot after hounds. The monuments showing crossbowmen, St.Vigeans No.1<sup>A</sup>, Shandwick<sup>A</sup> and Glenferness<sup>A</sup> are a small group linked stylistically (the crossbowmen are all of the same form) and located not far from each other. The crossbow is a contemporary weapon and appears here as an unusual representation of hunting practices in Pictland. Bowmen are found in Northumbrian sculptural contexts but do not use the crossbow. Generally, Northumbrian bowmen stalk birds or beasts ensconced within vine scroll such as St.Andrews, Auckland, Co.Durham and Hexham.

Pictish and Irish hunts are also characterised by other features. The episode of the hunt is reduced to a central dramatic incident shown as part of a single whole. It displays a heroic combat of man against beast. The

incidents are episodic and often appear unrelated in the more elaborate hunts but give a general impression of realism through a few simple formulae. There is a tendency towards breaking down the scenes into a series of self-contained motifs such as the common arrangement of horsemen in one register, deer and hounds in another. The unity of the composition is decorative, each element arranged with consideration for the placement of the next to form a harmonious whole. For example, the fitting of the hound into the frame of the horse's forelegs. Each hunt episode is reduced to its barest essentials but retains a kinetic sense.

The elements of the hunt, even in its simplest form, are all selected from a restricted range of subject matter and forms (the horsemen, horsemen and hound groupings, and deer and hound groups). Horsemen, hounds and prey are distributed in registers, often isolating specific figures through scale and position, with the tendency to arrange the horsemen hierarchically from top to bottom of the scene.<sup>2</sup> Also, any sense of naturalism is subjected to the stylisation of the elements making up the hunt. Most of the figures in a hunt seem to float in space without supporting frame or groundline as anchor. This emphasises the sense of stylisation and subjugation of realism - "it serves as an abstract, unreal background...taken over into a representation in which space had ceased to be thought of in terms of perspective realism."<sup>3</sup> This is also true of many of the equestrian processions and is a trait of Insular sculpture in general.

The Pictish hunt has a stereotyped formula characterised by the diagonal alignment of the huntsman, and the placing in the space left below the leader of a leaping deer attacked at the shoulder and haunch by two pursuing hounds.<sup>4</sup> Once established this composition was repeated with small variations and additions.<sup>5</sup> This type of hunt takes up a good portion of the back of a cross-slab and is treated as a main element in the sculptural

programme of a particular monument. The action of the hunt is usually arranged in registers of action. The top register often consisting of a procession of horsemen/horsemen and hounds; and below deer and hound groupings.

Most Irish chases also follow this composition, elements placed in a linear vertical composition (ie. Banagher, Bealin). Irish chases are generally simpler consisting of a single horseman, hound, and stag. Many of these examples are characterised by a hierarchic arrangement of the horsemen as occurs with processions of riders on their own. The rider under focus is generally placed in the upper and central part of the scene and is often the largest in scale.

The equestrian often appears as a motif on its own in Pictish and Irish sculpture or as part of a procession made up of other equestrian figures. The motif of the horseman or cavalcade of horsemen does not include any animals of the chase, although hounds often accompany the horsemen. The rider may be armed or unarmed - a condition made problematic by weathering of the stone surface which may have obscured the appearance of weapons in some cases.

The equestrian motifs are all of a formulaic and stereotyped character, having the same features in one form or the other. Some of the most beautiful and probably earliest of the equestrian figures are found at Aberlemno and Meigle. Later examples show an evolution or rather 'degeneration' of form from the type. Both motifs are found as elements in chase compositions and display the same stereotyped forms. The equestrian constantly figures as a central and important motif to the composition of Pictish and Irish sculpture whether alone, with hounds or part of a hunt.

The equestrian figure is drawn to a formula. Generally all Pictish and Irish equestrians are of the same basic type. The horse's neck is arched; the head is small, neat, and wedge-shaped with a dished profile, tapering into

the muzzle which expands slightly in the nostril and mouth area, and small pricked ears. The legs are long and slender with knee, hock and fetlock joints well-defined and hooves small, neat and wedge-shaped. Eyes are almond-shaped.

The horse can be depicted in three gaits: i) a triumphal or high-stepping 'trot';<sup>6</sup> ii) a rearing or 'flying gallop' pose and iii) standing or walking. The triumphal 'trot' is the most common and characteristic leg movement of the horse. This is characterised by a high leg action, one foreleg lifted, bent at the knee, the other on the ground; the opposite hind-leg to the lifted foreleg is lifted and bent at the hock, the other hind leg is placed on the ground. In other words the diagonally opposite legs move forward. This is not a natural gait, the high leg action having more in common with the triumphal Roman equestrian than any sense of naturalism.

The rearing or flying gallop pose consists of both forelegs lifted together and the hind-legs similarly lifted off the ground or supporting the horse's weight. The legs are fully extended in the front and the rear. The standing or walking gait is most simply that all four legs are placed on the ground, often with one hind-leg forward in a striding motion. Alcock terms this an 'amble' in which both legs on the same side of the horse move forward.<sup>7</sup>

The tail can be either long and down-falling, docked or wavy. Horses with docked tails appear on examples such as Meigle No.5, Rossie Priory, St.Madoes and Cossans. "Docked" tails are generally those that have been cut at a point on the tail bone about half way between the hock and croup. Some of those example termed docked appear to be trimmed just above the hock rather than docked in the accepted sense. Wavy tails <sup>are found</sup> on examples like Dupplin, Benvie, Inchbrayock No.1, Forteviot No.4, St.Madoes, Meigle Nos. 1,2,26, Shandwick and others. Alcock suggests that these are bound with rings at intervals to give this appearance (I however could not see these bindings).<sup>8</sup> Generally, most Pictish and Irish horses have long straight



tails.

Horses, especially for riding, hunting and warfare are a major theme of Early Medieval Pictish cross-slabs and Irish crosses suggesting that they are also a major interest of their patrons<sup>9</sup> - the warrior class that owned them represented by the horseman himself. The rider is also of a characteristic type - seated just behind the horse's withers, leg bent slightly at the knee and the toe of his leg pointing between the forelegs of his mount. Henderson was among the first to note the features characterising the rider in what she terms a "narrative style" used for horsemen who form parts of procession and hunts.<sup>10</sup> She describes the typical Pictish rider as a "figure in strict profile...general proportions of the body are correct. The facial type is constant: the hair is long, the nose prominent, and the chin pointed or bearded."<sup>11</sup> The hair is often in a pony-tail at the nape of the neck. Clothing, weapons and horse tack vary between monuments.

As the "declining symbol" hypothesised by Stevenson, the equestrian figure follows a similar pattern of development. The *declining symbol* theory was proposed by Stevenson,<sup>12</sup> a symbol being originally designed complete with internal decoration, all other versions descending from this 'correct' original. We accept it is true of the chase and equestrian motifs. With the passage of time the quality of these motifs generally decline and their forms degenerate. The earliest examples of the equestrian such as those at Aberlemno, examples at Meigle, and Hilton of Cadboll demonstrate the most lively and complete or evolved form. From here we can witness a decline in drawing standard and a degeneration of the equestrian form.

The most usual indicators of this degeneration are the equestrian becoming altogether more clumsy. A misunderstanding of the horse's leg action; the head of the horse becoming much heavier and squarer and often too large in proportion to its torso; legs becoming shorter and thicker, and the joints ill-defined. Signs of decline or



lateness in the Pictish Class II group include: two ears in a V-shape (as at Inchbrayock, St.Madoes); an arched but rather sinuous neck; the head disproportionately large; the legs quite well drawn although the hooves are of different sizes; and its mid-section too thin in relation to the head. It is this degeneration in quality of drawing which characterise later Class II and III examples. The head gradually becomes more exaggerated in size, squarer and heavier in shape; the back sway; action of the legs misunderstood, and the hooves more foot-like (an exaggeration of the fetlock joint) as is found with the Bressay equestrian figure.

It is typically the Perthshire and Angus monuments that display the finest examples of the Pictish equestrian motif. Degeneration of the formulaic equestrian form while it may be used as an indicator of relative chronology, also most typically is an indicator of copying from a model. This is also suggested by the stereotypical form of the equestrian. Perhaps a pattern book or template was used by the sculptor, the Perthshire and Angus horsemen may have been the models, explaining misunderstanding of form and degenerative features through the medium of copying. This suggests that the sculptor perhaps relied on drawings or even descriptions his models. The repetition of a stereotyped form also makes it easier for an artist to create an easily recognisable and identifiable motif - an important factor for an image carrying specific iconographical content - and simple for an artist to repeat again quickly.

Irish horses appear to be similar to later Pictish Class II types. The bodies and legs are often elongated with an overall sense of disproportion although some examples are squat and sturdy. Curle identified two types of horses: one being small and lightly built with sloping quarters, tail set low, high action, and high head carriage; and the other a small but heavy animal with a big, clumsy head and strong, high quarters.<sup>13</sup> Here the

author has simply identified the main features characterising the earlier horses from the later types, that is, the general decline of type. In the case of the rider, he often is too large for his mount; his head is too large, and he is seated too low on his mount's back appearing to sit in the rib cage of the horse, often his leg is positioned in a different position than in the earlier examples. As Henderson points out, "It is the fact that the portrayal of horsemen in the latest of the Pictish symbol-bearing slabs is poor. The horses are regularly broken backed or have disproportionately large heads. It is important to recognize this decline...The Pictish genius for sensitive line drawing of animals failed before the social relevance of the symbols themselves had come to an end."<sup>14</sup>

The equestrian figure is more common than the hunt composition. The equestrian can either occur singly or in groups. These cavalcades of two or more equestrian figures I have termed *processions*. The series of equestrian processions consist of two or more horsemen, armed or unarmed, travelling together. Groups of horsemen and hounds are also arranged in these types of compositions. The equestrian procession is made up of the stereotyped equestrian figure. The equestrian form is simply repeated with little variation to create a composition. Variation in size, clothing and horse-trappings may serve to indicate the relative status of the riders in a procession and differentiate them from their companions.

Equestrian processions are found in various forms;

- i) horseman placed one behind the other (Meigle No.26);
- ii) one below the other (St.Madoes);
- iii) one behind the other and grouped in registers (Cossans);
- iv) a triangular group - generally a single horseman placed in a top and central position above those below who ride one behind the other (Meigle No.2).

This suggests that the horsemen are not randomly placed but carefully arranged. Often a larger horseman is placed at the top and central position or as the first in

the cavalcade. Perhaps this is a visual method of representing regal, military or societal status.<sup>15</sup> These processions simply combine the individual types of equestrian, most commonly the triumphal type, to form a composition. In other words, the formula is simply repeated to form a series of equestrian figures which in turn make up a cavalcade.

Equestrian processions may also include hounds. Generally one to five horsemen are portrayed travelling in a procession accoutered with weapons and hounds accompanying them. The hounds usually run in front of or behind the horsemen. Occasionally they appear to be suspended in the space just above or below a horse. The horsemen and hounds motif cannot be described as a hunt. The motif is made up of two elements which appear in chase scenes, the equestrian figure and attendant greyhound-like hunting dog.

The hound is generally of the same stereotyped form - a greyhound type dog with a small wedge-shaped head and tapering sharp muzzle; triangular shaped ears that either lay back along the skull or are pricked forward; a long thin tail sometimes curled at the end; a thin tapering torso which narrows through the stifle area just before the muscle mass of the haunches; and long thin legs. The hounds usually move in the same manner, in a flying gallop; forelegs extended together and hind-legs extended together in a similar manner to a rocking horse. Often the hound appears to leap in this pose. In some examples the hound appears to walk or stand with all four legs resting on the ground. There are two types of hounds: the greyhound type described above, and a heavier mastiff-like dog characterised by its massive shoulders, and heavier blunter head. Its tail either curls over its back or between its legs and it is easy to confuse with beasts meant to represent lions.

Clothing and equipage of the horse and rider can vary from monument to monument but generally they are of the

same type. The horseman usually wears a short knee length tunic, breeches and carries a spear, small round shield and sword in its scabbard. On a few examples riders wear tunics with peaked hoods such as on St.Madoes. The horseman may also wear a winged shoe as on Meigle No.5, Monifieth No.3, Dunfallandy and Elgin Cathedral No.4. Horsemen on Benvie, Kirriemuir No.2 and Aberlemno No.2 wear helmets with a nasal. The Kirriemuir example being unusual as the lower rider wears a cockaded Roman type helmet as well as attire. *A Note on Pictish Symbols associated with the Chase and the Equestrian Motifs:*

Before embarking upon further iconographical discussion of it is necessary to examine the symbols (as defined in Early Christian Monuments of Scotland {ECMS}) that are often included in the chase and equestrian motifs of Pictish Class II. The Class II chase and equestrian compositions occur upon cross-slabs which display sets of symbols. Specific geometric symbols are usually found in association with the hunt or equestrian, most often the double-disc and Z-rod, crescent and V-rod, double-disc, crescent, mirror and comb symbols. Abstract animal forms are also used 'elephant', serpent and Z-rod.

The presence of these symbols upon these monuments and alongside motifs which can bear a Christian meaning and act as part of an overall Christian iconographical programme, suggests that these symbols were accepted and tolerated within a Christian context. The symbols accompanying the hunt and equestrian motifs may well serve as "secular and royal indicators or identifiers" drawing the viewer's attention to who may have acted as one of the patrons to the production of the monument and who held secular power. The very presence and repetition of certain symbols in conjunction with our motifs suggests that they conveyed additional information to the motifs themselves.

The symbols accompanying the chase or equestrian sometimes dominate the stone having a significant size in relation to the motif they are placed in association with.

Symbols of a small scale are often placed beside a specific image, thereby becoming more 'image-specific' within the composition than the larger symbols which are usually placed above a scene.

On Aberlemno No.3 a large crescent and V-rod and double-disc and Z-rod are placed atop a chase scene. A mirror and comb symbol of much smaller scale to the larger symbols above the chase on Hilton of Cadboll is placed within this chase composition in front of the woman on horseback. This is an example of the smaller image-specific use of symbols. These symbols directly relate to the image, here a horsewoman, they are placed with. This suggests that symbols occurring in this manner may refer to the figure's status. In most cases the image-specific symbols accompany the horseman who occupies the upper or central position in the composition and/or is of the largest size in relation to any accompanying riders as at Largo and Meigle No.1. This would suggest that the symbols do indeed act as status indicators when used as image-specific especially when the factors of positioning and size of the horseman they qualify are taken into consideration.

The chase and equestrian motifs are associated with geometric symbols or "object" symbols (ie. the mirror and comb on Hilton of Cadboll; the anvil, tongs and hammer on Dunfallandy and shears on Migvie). Charles Thomas suggests that others may derive ultimately from stylised drawings of accoutrements of the warrior aristocracy

<sup>16</sup>

Object symbols like the anvil, tongs and hammer at Dunfallandy may be representations of the esteemed status craftsmen were held in Celtic societies. The comb and shears appear in the early Welsh tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen*.<sup>17</sup> The shears, comb and razor are found between the ears of the enchanted boar *Twrch Trwyth*. To obtain these implements is one of the tasks of the story. They appear to symbolise the royal status of the boar, once a king. Such

symbols perhaps appear as royal or status indicators on Pictish sculpture, especially when associated with hunting or riding as these are the pursuits of traditional heroes such as Arthur.

The sets of symbols appearing with the chase or equestrian image then, may have expressed Pictish social concepts as suggested by the object symbols and the abstract symbols ideas such as social relationships or rank. The use of the symbols over a long period (Class I and II) and their wide distribution suggests that a well-established system governed their use, permitted public recognition and was bound to the social structure of contemporary Pictland.<sup>18</sup> Further interesting interpretations of the function of the symbols in Class I and Class II are found in Anthony Jackson (1984), Henderson (1971), and Thomas (1965).



## Chapter 2 - The Chase Motif:

### 2.1. The 'David' Iconographical Group:

This group of Pictish and Irish sculpture includes monuments bearing the hunt motif associated with the Old Testament symbolism of David. These monuments can be further subdivided according to stylistic and iconographic similarities into four sub-groups as follows:

- i) St.Andrew's Hunt Group;
- ii) Scenes Possibly Intended as David Iconography;
- iii) Later Pictish David Iconography;
- iv) Clonmacnois Hunt Group.

The Pictish representations of David imagery are closely related.<sup>1</sup> David imagery is one element in a series of images having cumulative significance as part of an iconographical programme consisting of Old Testament and New Testament salvation imagery.<sup>2</sup> The front panel of the St.Andrew's sarcophagus has been one of the most often discussed examples of the Pictish use of David iconography<sup>3</sup> and of a "classicising style" often associated with the Mediterranean influences found in manuscript illustration such as the Lindisfarne Gospels' evangelist portraits. One group of cross-slabs closely connected to the St.Andrew's front panel include Aberlemno, Aldbar and Nigg.<sup>4</sup> These examples all display hunting scenes which are directly associated with the motif of *David Rending the Lion's Jaws*. In this sense and that of stylistic similarity these monuments form a sub-grouping within this topic.

The remaining sculptures display different motifs associated with David and differ in certain elements of style to those monuments associated with the St.Andrew's shrine. This group are less dependent on the example of the sarcophagus and have a simpler imagery<sup>5</sup> such as the Dupplin cross.

The motif of *David and the Lion* is well-documented in Hiberno-Saxon art. Much like the hunt and equestrian motifs it derived influence from Carolingian court art of the 790's for its models or contemporary Greek models. Objects such as the manuscripts and ivories of the Court School of

Charlemagne may have provided direct influence. The classicising style of the Pictish representations, notably the St. Andrew's sarcophagus, indicates a revival of classical style either through the Carolingian court influence or direct knowledge of classical tradition.

Henderson states speculatively that the "Pictish [David] cycle is ultimately dependent on English models, or models available in England..." before Carolingian influence became strong in the 9th century.<sup>6</sup> She derives this hypothesis from an examination of the David images found in the *Vespasian Psalter* and *Durham Cassiodorus*. Davidic and psalmic imagery could very well derive from such a source as well as later Carolingian examples like the *Utrecht Psalter*.

The occurrence of David iconography on Pictish sculpture is as Henderson suggests, an aspect of the development of Insular art in the 8th century, when its iconographical scope was beginning to broaden.<sup>7</sup> The use of David and hunt motifs in manuscript illumination is directly connected with the embellishment of psalter text and commentary. These motifs are used in a similar manner upon Pictish and Irish monuments and are linked with an understanding of the psalms. David images first appear in Britain in the *Durham Cassiodorus* and the *Vespasian Psalter* both attributed to the second quarter of the 8th century.<sup>8</sup>

The *Durham Cassiodorus* (Durham Cathedral MS B II 30) contains a version of Cassiodorus' commentary on the psalms. It is the earliest known copy of this work.<sup>9</sup> The *Durham Cassiodorus* is a text of Cassiodorus' commentary on the psalms. Cassiodorus' commentary influenced how the Medieval world read and understood the psalms. The Old Testament as a foreshadowing of the New was a vital part of these commentaries. There is good evidence that upon Cassiodorus' death that some of the books from his library at his monastery the Vivarium, eventually reached Northumbria and Jarrow.<sup>10</sup> The Durham illuminated manuscript was perhaps produced or influenced from this

centre. Bede was also familiar with a Cassiodoran Bible and refers to him as a psalm commentator.<sup>11</sup> This suggests that not only were artistic models for David imagery available in Northern Britain, but that these understandings of the iconographical meaning of the psalms was current.

The *Vespasian Psalter* (London, British Library MS Cotton Vespasian A.I) originally consisted of a decorated and illustrated text of the Roman version of the Psalms.<sup>12</sup> The Psalter was likely produced at St. Augustine's, Canterbury, designed as a luxury service book including texts used in the liturgy.<sup>13</sup> The earliest image of *David Rending the Lion's Jaws* in Insular art appears in an initial d on fol.53r.<sup>14</sup> This suggests that these were familiar devotional images requiring no identification.<sup>15</sup>

It from such manuscript models that sculpture like the St. Andrews sarcophagus may ultimately derive its imagery. The St. Andrews sarcophagus has been dated to around 800 by Henderson and A. Ritchie, not long after the date given to the *Vespasian Psalter* and the *Durham Cassiodorus*.<sup>16</sup>

An Eastern model may ultimately lie behind Insular David imagery via Mediterranean models present in England reflecting Byzantine influences.<sup>17</sup> It has been suggested that if the existence of an Early Medieval biblical cycle in England is reflected by the Bible at Canterbury (London, British Library Royal MS I.E.VI) which may have had illustrations, then some of the Early Medieval elements of Pictish iconography might have their origin in southern English manuscript models.<sup>18</sup> The 8th century English manuscripts of the "Canterbury School" reflect the style of their models closely and it is this that happens in sculpture like the St. Andrew's shrine.<sup>19</sup>

As we discussed in Part One, Sassanian and Late Antique silver plate ruler images often show a king hunting who is nimbed, diademed and in the attire of a warrior-king. Likewise, in Early Medieval manuscript illumination the image of David often appears nimbed as in the *Vespasian Psalter* and *Durham Cassiodorus*. The *Durham Cassiodorus* King

David as warrior on fol.172b stands nimbed, holding a spear, wearing a long tunic with a mantle draped over his shoulder.<sup>20</sup> The St.Andrews sarcophagus David hunts the lion, on horseback and as warrior attired in a similar fashion, although he is not nimbed. In this manner the connection of the David images with images of kingship is expressed visually and possible models for these images are suggested.

The motif of *David and the Lion* illustrates the account found in I Kings, 17.34-5, where David tells Saul, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep and there came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out of the flock. I went out after him and smote him... and when he arose again I took him by the beard and slew him." David's deliverance of the lamb was equated with Christ's deliverance of man from death.<sup>21</sup> In the text of the psalms one is struck by the recurring images of lions as the wicked lying in wait and of man being preyed upon by ferocious beasts. As Henderson points out the lions are the unifying factor in the St.Andrews composition imparting a general theme of the psalm images mentioned above.<sup>22</sup> Here there may be an attempt to illustrate the text of the Psalms as in the *Utrecht Psalter*.<sup>23</sup> The illustrations on the shrine are concentrated into one large picture like in psalters such as *Utrecht*, where illustrations of each psalm are concentrated into one large picture at the head of the psalm.<sup>24</sup> In Pictish hunt scenes then we may see a reference to David iconography as in the *Utrecht Psalter*, especially when combined with known David motifs as at St.Andrews.

The chase when portrayed as part of David iconography has a definite symbolism. David appears as both king and warrior pursuing the monarch of the beasts, the lion. Early Medieval representations of the Israelite king David can be regarded as a "type" or *figura* of contemporary kingship.<sup>25</sup> The idea of the Christian Roman Emperor as a "David" figure was current at an early date. Pope John II in 533 made the

bishops of Arles aware of the exemplar that the "worldly rulers" would find in the Book of Kings' accounts of David and Saul.<sup>26</sup>

However, Bede does not use this concept in his ideas of kingship or do the form and context of David in 8th century Western manuscripts. An idea of early North British perspectives on kingship and royal iconography may be based on Bede's influences and models.<sup>27</sup> J. McClure suggests that Bede's ideal of royal as well as religious behaviour was formed in the first instance by his knowledge of the ancient Israelites (wrote commentary on the first Book of Samuel, 716), the Book of Kings and the writings of Gregory, Augustine and Origen.<sup>28</sup> In the first and second Book of Kings Bede would have gained the idea that the history of the Israelites depended on the influence, ability and military strength of its kings under God, in spiritual and political terms.<sup>29</sup> Bede would also have learned from scriptural reading of the significance of the military strength of kings, their need to be effective warleaders in defence of their people against the encroachment of hostile and aggressive kings (ie. Bede's comparison of Aethilfrith of Northumbria with Saul).<sup>30</sup> The authority of the king also depended on the acceptance of his rule over a wide area populated by diverse peoples under his minor rulers.<sup>31</sup>

Also from scriptural readings came the lessons that the primary cause of kingly power and its acceptance by subject rulers, was military victory in "significant trials of strength with rivals", that each king has a special place in the divine plan, and that moral judgements should be passed on all his actions.<sup>32</sup> These ideas permeate Irish tradition concerning sovereignty and may explain why the kingly symbols of the chase and equestrian appear on the Christian sculpture of Pictland and Ireland. That kingship could be given a scriptural basis and association with the heroic Old Testament kings, such as David, gives the chase and equestrian image a potent spiritual and worldly



symbolism.

In Ireland and Pictland, representations of David were possibly adopted as a prefiguration of Christ or a model for the contemporary ruler which expanded upon ideas of divine kingship in the Church and evident in non-Christian ideas of kingship in early Irish tradition. Bullough states, "In spite of the importance of hunting in the life of the Western kings and magnates and the almost ritual character of a royal hunt, which is apparent in the literary sources, it is a theme almost entirely ignored by artists in the West, even in the Carolingian period - which makes the Pictish series the more remarkable...the association on some of them of the imagery of David and of the hunt, at least raises the possibility that they were a visual expression of the authority of the last independent kings of the Picts."<sup>33</sup> Possible models for the image of the hunt are rare in the West and even more difficult to establish the historicity for. In light of this we must turn to more "oblique" sources of influence or parallelism.

Early Medieval writers were anxious to show the way in which the Old Testament prophesied and prefigured the events of the New Testament. St. Augustine summed up this Christian view "the New Testament is but the Old revealed."<sup>34</sup> David as an Old Testament figure and author of the psalms was the ancestor of Christ; his kingdom on earth foreshadowing that of Christ in heaven; his anointment by Samuel foreshadowed Christ's baptism by John; and David's struggle with the lion was a figura of Christ's struggle with the Devil.<sup>35</sup> That the lamb or ram often appears as one of David's attributes upon Pictish sculpture is of significant symbolic import. The inclusion of the deer in hunt scenes associated with David motifs may be a reference to the baptism of Christ by John as prefigured by David's anointing and kingship.



## i) The St.Andrew's Hunt Group:

This group of monuments display developed type hunt composition in direct association with the Old Testament motif of *David Rending the Lion's Jaws*. These monuments are the St.Andrews sarcophagus (Pl.1), Aberlemno No.3 (Pl.2) and Nigg (Pl.3) cross-slabs. The Hilton of Cadboll (Pl.4) cross-slab is included here as its hunt scene is of a related composition to this group. As regards style and content St.Andrews belongs with Class II as do the three cross-slabs. The St.Andrews sarcophagus, Aberlemno No.3, Nigg and Hilton of Cadboll monuments are generally dated to the early 9th century<sup>36</sup> but could be as early as the second half of the 8th century when the Irish chase and equestrian monuments are taken into consideration along with possible models.

The chase scenes of the St.Andrews sarcophagus especially consist of elements derived ultimately from Late Classical sources. St.Andrews, Aberlemno and Nigg have similar iconographical programmes which emphasise the theme of salvation and deliverance associated with Davidic imagery. The identification of the horseman and hunter on foot on these three examples rests on their direct association with the motif of *David and the Lion*, and the similarity each of these figures bear to one another upon all these monuments. A stereotyped form of the horseman and of the hunter-warrior is repeated upon the St.Andrews, Aberlemno No.3, Hilton of Cadboll and Nigg monuments.

However, it is important to note that the apparently secular motifs, the chase and horseman, are chosen to represent David. These do not appear as part of the extant cycle of David illustrations anywhere else outside Pictland or Ireland. In this sense, the iconographical scheme still retains the element of ambivalence inherent to Pictish and Irish sculpture.

The Aberlemno and Nigg cross-slabs have compositional orders and elements similar to St.Andrews. The hunt on all three examples consists of a hunter on horseback and a

hunter on foot, that is the hunter in his guises of potentate and warrior, illustrating the dual roles of a king. David is identified on all three sculptures by his 'attributes'; the ram and harp (the ram appears just above the horseman's shoulder at St.Andrews; a lamb and harp above David and the Lion at Aberlemno; and to the left of *David and the Lion* at Nigg).

The Nigg, Aberlemno No.3 and St.Andrews sarcophagus deal with the arrangement of the three scenes (*David and the Lion*, hunt on horseback, and hunt by a warrior on foot) in different ways. As at St.Andrews, the dominant motif at Nigg is the *David Rending the Lion's Jaws* in the centre of the panel. The two hunt scenes are smaller and accorded a subordinate role to the larger David as on the sarcophagus. At Aberlemno, the hunt is given the dominant focus.

The Nigg iconographical scheme has more in common with St.Andrews than Aberlemno No.3, illustrating the same three episodes without dividing them from each other by the use of framing devices as at Aberlemno. The order of the chase motifs is reversed at Nigg, the chase with the warrior on foot placed above the *David and the Lion* and equestrian chase.

At St.Andrews and Aberlemno, the equestrian hunt is placed above that of the hunt on foot, perhaps a reflection on the status of the horseman. At Nigg, the hunt scenes frame the David and lion motif, the latter being placed in between the two chases. By placing the three events one on top of the other, a coherent vertical composition is created. The Aberlemno sculptor arranges the three scenes in a vertical fashion as well; the horseman and warrior combined as part of a single large chase scene and the *David and the Lion* a smaller motif below it in a frame. The two hunts at St.Andrews are placed one above the other to the left of the large David motif - the composition is then read horizontally from right to left. All these compositions share in common an arrangement of the figures so that they seem to float upon the pictorial space rather

than anchored by a groundline.

C.L.Curle believes that the Nigg figure scene is derived, if not from the scene of St.Andrews, at least from the same source.<sup>37</sup> The carving is flatter than the St.Andrews sarcophagus and the forms have a certain stiffness to them which is also true of Aberlemno. However, I do not feel as Curle does that the composition is more disconnected.<sup>38</sup> The programme is treated decoratively but is clearly also treated as a narrative. Like St.Andrews and Aberlemno, the motifs are arranged as a commentary illustration on theological and secular subject matter, much in the way of the illustration of Medieval psalters.

Henderson, using Hilton of Cadboll as an example points out that, "comparatively early in the history of Class II the Pictish artists appear to have invented, or adapted from a native source...a stereotyped hunting scene formula."<sup>39</sup> She lists the features of this hunt formula as the diagonal alignment of the horsemen, and the placing, in the space below the lead rider of a hart and hound, and that once established this pattern was repeated with minor variations on other Pictish hunts.<sup>40</sup> This is true of examples such as Aberlemno No.3, Hilton of Cadboll and Elgin Cathedral as well as diagonal placement of horsemen in processions at Meigle Nos.1 and 4.

This group comprises of the most elaborate hunt compositions on Pictish sculpture. The St.Andrews, Aberlemno, Nigg and Hilton of Cadboll chase motifs may be discussed in terms of the elements that make them up:

1. *David Rending the Lion's Jaws*;
2. Deer hunts;
3. Equestrian huntsmen;
4. Huntsmen on foot;

and 5, a note on Hilton of Cadboll's relation to these hunt scenes.

#### *1. David Rending the Lion's Jaws:*

The St.Andrews sarcophagus panel, Aberlemno No.3 and Nigg cross-slabs display an imagery of *David and the Lion* and David the Warrior unique to Pictland. The very essence of the iconographical meaning of the St.Andrews, Aberlemno

and Nigg hunt motifs and David images is each motif's relation to one another.

At St.Andrews and Nigg the abrupt juxtaposition of the scale of the figure of *David Rending the Lion's Jaws* motif to the smaller figures of the hunting scenes serve to emphasise the prime symbolism of the composition - the iconography of David and its associated meanings. The large size of this motif shows deliberate intent to create a point of theological focus through scale, lifting the motif above mere narrative illustration of the event from the First Book of Kings.<sup>41</sup> The figures may be arranged asymmetrically and be of varying sizes, but the motives that make up the composition do not as Curle states bear "no obvious relation to one another."<sup>42</sup>

The Nigg *David and Lion* scene is placed centrally for emphasis. Like the sarcophagus hunt panel, the viewer's eye is first drawn to the *David and Lion* motif, a deliberate result of the arrangement of the motives. The Nigg programme is "read" in the same sequence as the St.Andrew's programme: first the *David and Lion*, second the David on horseback, and finally the David the warrior chase. In this manner an overall theme of salvation, deliverance and divine kingship is emphasised, illuminating the interpretation and understanding of the otherwise ambivalent hunt scenes.

As at St.Andrews and Nigg where scale serves as emphasis, the small scale and framing of the *David and Lion* and larger scale of the hunt at Aberlemno may be a deliberate attempt to create a theological or iconographical focus. The hunt here is the most dominant image on the slab besides the cross on the front. We can assume that not only is the David imagery of the hunt emphasised, but the hunt's theological and secular symbolism as well. The sarcophagus hunt is very much in subordination to the *David and Lion* motif emphasising its religious connotations over secular considerations. The Aberlemno *David and Lion* could have been carved to a larger

scale. This is evident from the space that remains empty below the motif.

The *David and Lion* motif at Nigg is of the same type as that at St.Andrews attired and posed in the same manner, the lion small and rearing up on its hind-legs. The image on the Aberlemno cross-slab is differently conceived than St.Andrews or Nigg. The David figure is similar being frontal, with a large heavy head, large hands, long tunic, long hair and rending the lion's jaws apart with both hands. The lion however, does not leap up at David. The lion stands all four feet on the ground whilst David rends its jaws apart. It is also not the classicising beast of St.Andrews but a more Insular type appearing dog-like with a blunt head. This conception of the *David and Lion* motif is also closer to the *Vespasian Psalter* illumination of the initial d on fol.53.<sup>43</sup> Aberlemno betrays a fundamental aspect of the model in the pose of the lion and its form, what Henderson calls a "timid alteration" of the model in relation to the "skilful" refashioning at St.Andrews.<sup>44</sup>

Curle compares the Pictish *David and Lion* to that of Gilgamesh while Roe derives the motif from the classical image of Heracles wrestling with the Nemean lion.<sup>45</sup> The Pictish iconography for *David and the Lion* can be attributed to a model resembling the version of the scene in the *Vespasian Psalter*.<sup>46</sup> There are similarities in style such as the heavy head, large hands and the lamb placed by David's shoulders where it is shown in many Pictish representations of David. The St.Andrew's and Nigg's David also resemble the Psalter David in dress, a mantle draped about his body and over the shoulder in linear folds and a long sleeved tunic and hair type which is long and curling. However, the action of the lion is different on both monuments, as it leaps up at David and does not stand as in the psalter and is not directly derivative of the psalter illustration.<sup>47</sup> Although the lion does not leap up, David is standing erect as at St.Andrews, not kneeling on its back as in Irish and



Byzantine versions.

The leaping or rearing lion at St.Andrews and Nigg is a result of "refashioning", and was not an intrinsic feature of the model.<sup>48</sup> Models for such lions are found in Insular art and the inspiration for this pose may have come from a St.Mark the Evangelist symbol or the image of *Daniel in the Lions' Den* such as on Meigle No.2.<sup>49</sup> This shows a measure of independence in Pictish David representations as it does not follow the Irish type of *David and the Lion* in the Mithraic position (David crouches on the lion's back and rends its jaws apart with both hands<sup>50</sup> either.

Some kind of relationship exists between the Aberlemno, Nigg and St.Andrews compositions but the appearance of the musicians and harp attribute is problematic, neither included at St.Andrews.<sup>51</sup> The trumpeters and cymbal player at Nigg may share a similar source to those of Aberlemno and Hilton of Cadboll. Musicians and David appear in the *Vespasian Psalter* and David and his harp on fol.81v of the *Durham Cassiodorus* and fol.30v of the *Vespasian Psalter*. The overall David imagery of these monuments is strengthened by the association of trumpeters with David in the manuscript examples.<sup>52</sup>

The parallel of the trumpeters and *David and the Lion* at Aberlemno to those of the *Vespasian Psalter* suggests that the cross-slab version may have been an adoption of a model that influenced southern English psalters like the *Vespasian* and that these models were available in Pictland. This may also have ramifications on the relative datings of the Aberlemno and St.Andrews sculptures. The Aberlemno trumpeters are closer to the manuscript version than the other examples in their form and positioning, suggesting Aberlemno may be an earlier work than Hilton of Cadboll (c.800).<sup>53</sup>

In the 8th century Irish law tract, *Críth Gablach*, a detailed description is given of the seating plan of the king's banqueting hall. The seating in the king's hall is taken by his mercenaries or guardsmen, envoys, guest



companies, poets, harpers, pipers, horn-players, jugglers, noble clients and wife.<sup>54</sup> This description is much like the retinue accompanying the horsemen on the cross-slabs of Hilton of Cadboll and Nigg, replete with musicians. Perhaps the chase was part of the ritual of the feast in the king's great hall.

The lions depicted on the St.Andrews panel and Nigg cross-slab are not the canine creature characteristic of Pictish and Irish art (i.e. Lion of St.Mark in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*). These lions and those appearing at Nigg, Aberlemno and Elgin Cathedral are attempts to depict a real lion probably drawn from an Eastern source<sup>55</sup> such as Sassanian silver plate or Antique mosaics. However, the Aberlemno lion is much closer in type to the *Vespasian Psalter* illustration beast with its stance and form to the more dog-like Insular type. As Henderson points out these lions do not represent a novel and unprecedented type in Insular art being similar to the rampant short-faced lions of the St.Mark pages in the *Lichfield* and *Echternach Gospels*.<sup>56</sup> This means that they are of a type recognised in Insular manuscript illumination from an early period. This may suggest that the Aberlemno composition is earlier than its more classicising counterpart at St.Andrews.

## 2. Deer hunts:

At Aberlemno, Nigg and Hilton of Cadboll, the chase motifs illustrate the more usual type of native hunt, the deer, than the exotic lion hunt of St.Andrews. This makes the identification of the symbolic meaning of the motif more ambivalent than at St.Andrews where the lions pursued by mounted and foot hunters connects these figures with David. Direct association of the equestrian hunter with the *David and Lion* motif on both sculptures and the use of the same elements of composition as at St.Andrews suggests that we may also identify these horsemen with David. David is illustrated in the guise of an Early Medieval king mounted on a horse, attended by his hunting party and hunting the most regal of beasts, the deer.

According to literary traditions discussed in Part Two the deer hunt was a ceremonial part of kingship and political power. This marks the deer's relation to everyday secular life as well, causing the hunt motif to have a more ambivalent symbolism than at St. Andrews. Deer are the prey most often associated with sovereignty and dynastic origin tales in early Irish literature such as the tales of Níall and Lugaid discussed in. It is the chase by a predestined king and the transformation of the deer into a sovereignty figure that associates the deer hunt with kingship. The deer hunt symbolises a royal prerogative and test of kingly qualities which mark the ideal king.

These are also characteristics of renowned Old Testament rulers such as David. Like Níall, David is an ancestor figure, great warrior and hunter, who is tested as a youth for his right to become king. This secular symbolism of the chase accords well with the conception of David as a type of the ideal Christian king, underpinning the complementary nature of the use of these motifs in Pictish sculpture.

The prey of the hunters at Nigg, Aberlemno and Hilton of Cadboll are deer pursued by greyhound-like hounds. The deer are of the kind characteristic of Pictish hunt scenes in general. These hunt scenes also have a secular importance securely linked to and working alongside the theological content through the common theme of kingship and triumph. The deer hunt has its own Christian symbolism which emphasises and complements the theme of salvation and deliverance underpinning the David imagery.

As we have seen in Part One the deer is a potent symbol of salvation and rejuvenation through baptism and the teachings of the Church. The hart and hound are also found as part of the illustrations in psalters such as the *Utrecht Psalter* accompanying the text of Psalm 41. The huntsmen can be understood as Christ in pursuit of the soul or conversely, the persecutors of Christ pursuing him. In any of these interpretations the deer is connected with the

figure of Christ as is David as His ancestor and a prefiguration of Christ's kingdom in heaven.

Perhaps on the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab the deer hunt is linked with the symbolism of the Tree of Life and Paradise as the deer is framed by a vine scroll border. At St.Andrews, a deer is chased in a thicket of vine. The vine scroll is associated with the imagery of the Tree of Life. Northumbrian sculpture includes various examples of vine scroll motifs, some in which hunters stalk birds with bows.

Before considering the David iconography of the hunt then, the chase alone establishes a theme a salvation and deliverance. This links the hunt with the *David and the Lion* motif emphasising its symbolism of deliverance and salvation as the predominant iconographical understanding. The New Testament theme of the deer hunt iconography and its connection with ideas about baptism and Christ also, complements the Old Testament story of David as a prefiguration of events in the New Testament.

In the earlier Pictish deer and hound chases such as Aberlemno No.3 or Hilton of Cadboll, the deer do not have antlers, a very clear feature of allegorical stag figures as at Dunfallandy and other hunt scenes such as Eassie, Kirriemuir No.2, St.Vigeans No.1, Scoonie and Burghead No.7. In the Irish chase, the deer are depicted with antlers, identifying them as stags. We feel that the presence of antlers may indicate what models were followed and thereby a rough idea of dating. The later Pictish Class II and Class III chase scenes generally have antlered stags as part of the composition, such as Scoonie, Elgin Cathedral and Monifieth No.3. Deer with antlers are often also a feature of Irish cross hunts. Most of the antlered examples are from the region of Angus, the are where the hunt appears most often in Pictish sculpture as well as Fife.

### 3. *Equestrian huntsmen:*

The St.Andrews, Nigg, Aberlemno and Hilton of Cadboll equestrians conform to the characteristic Pictish type

described in Part Three, Chapter 1. The arrangement of the riders within the hunt share similar features as well.

The second rider at the top of the Aberlemno chase scene is the largest making him the most pre-eminent of the horsemen. This may set him out as the most important figure in the scene and our probable David figure. This device is used on other Pictish cross-slabs to mark one equestrian figure apart from his companions and thus elevate him in this manner (ie. Meigle Nos.2 and 3). The horses are also depicted in the characteristic 'Pictish trot', a triumphal gait similar to that seen on Roman triumphal arches, equestrian statues showing a victorious emperor or general, or the small statuette of Charlemagne on his horse.

The placing of a figure on horseback elevates him above those in his retinue who are on foot, like the musicians and footman on Aberlemno. Also, at Aberlemno and St.Andrews the equestrian is placed above the foot warrior, emphasising his status pictorially. To ride a horse is a public remark of wealth, power and mastery over a powerful and potentially dangerous beast. The horse in Christian understanding can be a symbol of victory. The symbols above the hunt scenes of Nigg, Aberlemno and Hilton of Cadboll, may be indicators of secular royal status of the horsemen. M.Herity suggests that it is "possible that these [David images] are oblique references to kingship, possibly to royal patrons, whose kingly attributes are viewed in terms of the king as True King, as Hero in various roles and Patron of the Arts..."<sup>57</sup>

The equestrian figure attacked by a lion during the hunt can be understood as David on horseback, an example of David as warrior and king. A similar horseman to the St.Andrews example, also with a falcon on his arm appears the cross-slab from Elgin Cathedral. This image is not found in any other David cycles but its connection with the *David and the Lion* motif on the sarcophagus cannot be ignored. It seems likely that in a culture where hunt and equestrian scenes were popular that David should be

represented in this manner and have taken a model which may have originally had no religious significance.<sup>58</sup> The use of a lion as the hunter's prey makes it easier to identify the image with David and kingship.

The St. Andrews hunt is remarkable for its inclusion of the lion as the main focus of the hunter. This in turn connects it with the scene to the right. The horseman also is adapted to 'match' the *David and the Lion* figure in dress and facial type.<sup>59</sup> These pictorial links serve to emphasise the iconographic meaning and that the composition should be seen as a whole. The horse is the characteristic high gaited Pictish horse. The equestrian here is probably the adaptation of the model having classical triumphal equestrian imagery. This would connect the image to a meaning involving ideals of kingship. The sword held by the horseman also serves as a linking device as the warrior carries a sword as does the large figure of David. The sword may be a reference to deliverance complimenting the theme of the *David and Lion* figure. In Psalm 17 David asks the Lord to deliver his soul from the lions using his weapon.<sup>60</sup>

The equestrian David on the St. Andrews sarcophagus is similar to silver plate ruler images having a close curling hairstyle, straight brow-line and uplifted arm clearly indicated. The equestrian at Repton (Northumbria) also features these details as well as a possible diadem. A Mercian cross-shaft of the late 8th century from Codford, Wiltshire, has a figure in a similar posture involved in hunting.<sup>61</sup> The huntsman though not mounted is half-turned, wearing a short belted tunic, cloak, a fillet around his head and has his right hand raised to hold a bush scroll. This hunter has the fillet and close wavy hair with strong brow-line as the Repton horseman. The long hair of the St. Andrews horseman and curled hairstyle may have denoted a king or "king-worthy" member of a ruling dynasty (Nelson suggests that the Franks identified the Merovingians as the "long-haired kings" suggesting that a special hairstyle may



have been a mark of status<sup>62</sup>).

In Irish literature heroes such as Cú Chulainn are described in terms of their fantastic hairstyles. His attire is similar to certain examples of the Pictish rider's attire, especially examples on which attempts are made to portray drapery (ie. St. Andrews sarcophagus) and some Pictish riders also wear the same type of shoe as the Cadford figure such as Meikle No.5. The parallel grooving used to indicate the folds of the garment at Cadford is matched almost exactly in the *Vespasian Psalter* on fol.30v.<sup>63</sup>

The equestrian figure could illustrate Psalm 45: *Accingere gladio tuo super femur tuum, potentissime, specie tua et pulchritudine tua intende, prospere procede, et regna...et deducet te mirabiliter dextera tua.*<sup>64</sup> David was a type of kingship - that of an exemplar of good and Christian kingship to the Western king. That David is depicted on horseback in a triumphal pose overcoming a most ferocious and royal beast emphasises these ideals well. The king overcoming the lion during the chase is a popular theme on Sassanian silver plates.

Kingship and equestrianism are connected in early Celtic tradition as discussed in Part Two. the horse is often associated with the birth of a hero or prince such as Cú Chulainn and Pryderi (of the Welsh *Mabinogion*). Horsemanship is an important part of the Irish king's *óenach* and inaugural ceremonies. The equestrian is accepted as a royal image within early Celtic tradition. It is connected with Christian themes through association with the overt David imagery of *David and the Lion*. This interpretation may also apply to the dominant Aberlemno and Nigg horsemen. These horsemen function in the manner suggested in early Irish tales and Welsh legal texts. A retinue of mounted warriors often accompanies a hero or king as in the *Gododdin*, *Fled Bricrenn* or the thirty-six horsemen of a Welsh king's household.

#### 4. Huntsmen on foot:



The foot warriors on Nigg, Aberlemno and St.Andrews appear to be of the same type. The huntsmen on Nigg and St.Andrews walk in the same manner, wear long tunics and grasp small square shields. This is the same kind of shield on Aberlemno - roughly square and slightly indented in the middle of each side. The Aberlemno huntsman appears to stand and holds his spear parallel to his body whilst those on Nigg and St.Andrews hold the spears in a more diagonal position.

The St.Andrews foot warrior hunts a lion linking him like the equestrian lion hunt above with the David motif. This suggests that the figure is indeed *David the Warrior*. Not only is he present in a programme including *David and the Lion*, he is of the same type as on the other David panels. This can also be assumed about the appearance of the equestrian in this context. The St.Andrews huntsman has similar features to the *David the Warrior* of the *Vespasian Psalter* and *Durham Cassiodorus* (eg. folded drapery, spear, shield) as do Nigg and Aberlemno (frontal stance).

##### 5. Note on Hilton of Cadboll:

Even though the Hilton of Cadboll hunt is often interpreted as a Davidic image, it is difficult to establish such a direct identification with such imagery here. Although the hunt scene shares common elements with St.Andrews, Nigg and Aberlemno it lacks directly associated David imagery. However, it is Hilton of Cadboll's similarities that suggest its hunt scene shared in a similar model.

Henderson has also suggested that the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab deer hunt scene along with its trumpeters may be associated with *David and the Musicians*.<sup>65</sup> The small hound leaping over the haunch of the woman's mount is identified as a lion by Henderson, J.Close-Brooks and Curle.<sup>66</sup> I however, believe this 'lion' to be a hound. The Hilton of Cadboll hound is not of the lion type - although it has a short blunt head like the Insular lion often does. Its tail is short, is not tufted

and only curls over the haunch not the back as is usual with lion representations (or between legs). This hound has more akin to the heavy set type of hunting dog such as found at Gask.

Hounds are also placed leaping above a horse's haunches in attendance of the rider at Elgin Cathedral, Aberlemno No.3 (stands rather than leaps), Cossans and Meigle No.1, all Class II examples. The only connection with David imagery is the similarity of elements of the Hilton of Cadboll hunt to these chase scenes. Nigg is also in Ross and Cromarty suggesting that these elements as well as the equestrian figures and leaping beasts were taken from a model available in this area showing David imagery.

The Hilton of Cadboll horsewoman is unique in Pictish sculpture. One is tempted to draw analogies with the Gaulish figure of Epona often shown sculpted in relief mounted on a horse in a similar fashion. Indeed, C.Thomas has drawn attention to the inscriptions to the goddess along the Antonine wall.<sup>67</sup> However, these date to the Roman occupation of Britain and Gaul, and while the Picts may have seen representations in the Antonine Wall area, it would be hard to identify the Hilton of Cadboll horsewoman with this essentially Romano-Gaulish goddess. However, goddess figures with equine associations are part of early Irish and Welsh mythology such as Macha and Rhiannon. Alcock, also suggests it is tempting to identify her with the Holy Mother journeying to Bethlehem, perhaps based ultimately on a model like Bishop Maximian's throne of the mid 6th century.<sup>68</sup>

Whether either of the above contentions be true, in secular terms the horsewoman probably represents a noblewoman or queen out to view the hunt with her male companion. Alcock suggests that this companion is the Chief Groom, an office known from early Welsh laws of court hierarchy.<sup>69</sup> It was not unknown in the early Middle Ages for a noble man or woman to watch the hunt. Carolingian court poetry describes such a practice. Court poet Ermold

the Black tells of empress Judith watching her husband Louis the Pious hunt even describing the noise of the trumpets.<sup>70</sup> Royal hunters often watch the hunt in early Irish tales such as that of *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin* or Finn.

*Summary:*

On these monuments the David iconography is in accordance with Pictish biblical iconography presenting a consistent programme of Old and New Testament salvation.<sup>71</sup> Association with the cross and animal combats on the front of the Aberlemno and Nigg cross-slabs underline the iconographical programme of the monument as a whole. The "jewelled" cross upon the front is reminiscent of that on the Mount of Golgotha recalling its symbolism and the importance of the veneration of the Cross.<sup>72</sup>

The theme of conflict is evident in all four chase compositions. Active conflict is represented most clearly by the hunting scenes - i.e. the horseman about to slay the lion with a sword and the warrior pursuing various beasts with his spear ready. Within the context of the hunt other conflicts take place. At St. Andrews a gryphon pounces on a mule and a hound in the upper left corner seizes another by its haunch. The Aberlemno and Nigg cross-slabs both have hart and hound motifs in which a hound seizes a deer's flank.

Scenes of conflict and demonic forces were frequently represented in Insular art and were often personified as fierce beasts attacking each other, voracious beasts representing demons of death, temptation and strife.<sup>73</sup> These scenes of conflict, by being placed beside the large figure of David on all three monuments and in association with the cross on the front of Aberlemno and Nigg, emphasise the image of salvation and deliverance represented by *David and the Lion*. The two hunt (equestrian and foot warrior) scenes are in this sense resolved by this image of ultimate salvation.<sup>74</sup> This also gives the iconographical programme a sense of coherence. The hunt is

part of a theme of salvation, an idea reinforced on the Aberlemno and Nigg cross-slabs by the representation of deer as the object of the chase.

The similarity in iconographic programmes, their compositions and style, may have occurred through inter-influence, facilitated by the locality of the monuments. Nigg is on the east coast of Scotland like St. Andrews (Fife), but is nearly 150 miles further north.<sup>75</sup> It is difficult to say whether there was direct contact between the two centres, but the existence of a church site at Nigg suggests that contact could well have been possible. Aberlemno (Angus) is also close to the east coast and closer than Nigg to St. Andrews. Iconographic ideas and programmes, as well as artistic influences could very well have travelled between these centres, especially as the trumpeters unique to Nigg and Aberlemno also appear on a monument in the same artistic sphere as Nigg or Hilton of Cadboll. This suggests that a similar model was available at roughly the same time in this area, perhaps through the influence of the important monastic and royal centre of St. Andrews.

ii) Scenes possibly intended as David Iconography:

The Eassie (Class II, Angus) and Kirriemuir No.2 (Class II, Angus) cross-slabs bear an unusual interpretation of the chase motif which may be intended as David imagery. These hunt compositions represent a single compositional element that is part of the more elaborate chases related to the St. Andrews sarcophagus, the foot hunter. These foot hunts find parallel upon a small group of Irish high cross hunt motifs. Eassie is attributed to the second half of the 8th century<sup>76</sup> or the early 9th century while Kirriemuir No.2 is likely not earlier than the 9th century.<sup>77</sup>

We propose that the Eassie (Pl.5) and Kirriemuir (Pl.6) hunt motifs are 'cuts' from the more elaborate chase compositions associated with *David Rending the Lion's Jaws*

images. Henderson defines her term 'cuts' within her discussion of Pictish David imagery.<sup>78</sup> She suggests that the musicians of the Nigg, Aberlemno and Hilton of Cadboll hunts are derived or 'cut' from the *David and Musicians* image (ie. Monifieth shaft).<sup>79</sup> Earlier we suggested that the mounted and foot huntsmen of St. Andrews, Nigg and Aberlemno represent David due to their close spatial and formal relationship to the *David and Lion* image. A relationship exists between the foot hunts of Eassie and Kirriemuir and this group of hunt scenes. If we accept this proposition an association with the symbolic meaning accorded to David images may suggest further iconographic significance for Eassie and Kirriemuir.

Monuments such as the Aberlemno No.3 bearing the *David the Warrior* motif may have served as a model for the sculptors of these cross-slabs. Cultural contacts with other centres such as St. Andrews rich in David imagery could well have arrived in the area through another ecclesiastical centre as Meigle has been suggested to be. While the existence of centres of sculpture and contacts are difficult to establish, what is evident is the similarity of the shared images found at St. Andrews, Nigg, Aberlemno, Eassie and Kirriemuir.

The Eassie and Kirriemuir cross-slabs share similar iconographical programmes. The tall figure of the hunter on Eassie and Kirriemuir carrying a small square shield may be interpreted as *David the Warrior* due to overall similarity to the *David the Warrior* figures on monuments bearing a much clearer use of David imagery. The Kirriemuir chase is fuller than the Eassie hunt. On both monuments the hunter figure is the dominant one (besides the cross) being the largest and only image on the left side of the shaft. The sequence of animals, placed one above the other, takes up about the same amount of space as the hunter to the left of them, on each example.

The tall hunter-warrior figures at Eassie and Kirriemuir bear features in common with similar figures at



St.Andrews, Nigg and Aberlemno No.3. The warriors on all these monuments are armed with a spear and small square shield, stand or stride along, and are involved in a chase. This particular warrior figure appears only in Pictish sculpture.<sup>80</sup> The Eassie warrior is closest in type to the example found at Nigg. Like the warrior at Nigg the Eassie hunter carries his shield in his far hand, held up and out rather than against his body as at Aberlemno and St.Andrews.

The Nigg hunter carries a spear as well and the small square indented shield as the St.Andrews hunter. He has the same stance as the Eassie and Kirriemuir hunters - striding out to pursue the animals in front of him. At Nigg the hunter on foot scene is also arranged in a similar manner to Eassie and Kirriemuir. The hunter is tall, the beasts placed vertically in the amount of space defined by the hunter's height. He also follows the same number of animals as at Eassie - three - a stag and his two hounds. The hunter at Kirriemuir follows four animals (a stag and three hounds). The Aberlemno warrior stands in front of the on coming hunters mounted on horses and the St.Andrews warrior follows four beasts in total as at Kirriemuir.

The Kirriemuir hunter-warrior figure is of the same type as at Eassie. However, this hunter carries his spear parallel to his body rather than across his shoulder as at Eassie and in addition carries a sack. He also wears a knee-length draped garment rather than a cloak as at Eassie, like the hunters at Nigg, St.Andrews and Aberlemno. The draping of the garment although stiff and linear is similar to the foot hunter-warrior of St.Andrews. He also wears shoes as does the St.Andrews figure. The similarity of the figures at Eassie and Kirriemuir to those at Nigg and St.Andrews suggests that the same model was available to the sculptors of these two slabs as was to those of the St.Andrews group. It is entirely possible that these monuments also served as inspiration to the sculptors of Eassie and Kirriemuir.



The small square shield is a common element of the foot huntsmen of the St.Andrews and related monuments. Common features include size, indented sides and in two cases visible central bosses. The hunters on all these monuments are adorned as warriors, carrying weapons that a warrior would also carry. On other cross-slabs such as those at Meigle and Aberlemno we see mounted warriors carrying shields and spears not only for the chase but for war as well. The square shield was not just equipment of the hunter but of the warrior (ie. the three warriors on the Birsay monument carry square shields and spears).

At St.Andrews the hunter pursues a deer-like beast and a lion, his hounds accompanying him. The Eassie and Kirriemuir hunters also pursue deer and a beast that may be a lion. The Eassie stag is decorated with scroll joints marking the muscles of the shoulder and haunch and has an impressive spread of antlers. Stags decorated with scroll joints are also found on monuments such as Dunfallandy and Nigg. Allegorical beasts with scroll joint definition also occur at Meigle and Rossie Priory. This may suggest that when a stag appears in conjunction with allegorical beasts and is decorated in the same manner on the front of the cross-slab that the allegorical symbolism of the stag as part of the iconographical programme as a whole is stressed. The *Physiologus* legends from which many of the meanings for allegorical animals on Pictish crosses may have been drawn also come to mind.

The association of the deer with Psalm 41 and as a symbol of baptism, regeneration and salvation is represented by the figure of the stag. The baptismal symbolism of the stag hunt may be linked to the baptismal symbolism of the Cross (see Part One) as both chases are placed about a central cross. The stag hunt emphasises the interplay of Old and New Testament motifs typical of Pictish sculptural programmes. The stag as an individual symbol complements the iconographical understanding of the David imagery at Eassie and Kirriemuir - the underlying

theme of deliverance and salvation. The Old Testament story of David is also a prefiguration of the New Testament story of baptism and Christ.

The stag to the right of the Kirriemuir cross shaft is not in the stereotype flight position of either a flying gallop, walking pace as at Eassie, or the same trotting pace typical of horses on Pictish sculpture. The stag leaps like many of its counterparts (eg. Aberlemno No.3 or Hilton of Cadboll), however its legs hang down awkwardly from the body. Henderson suggests that the stag lies dead, its tongue lolling out of its mouth and a bird of prey pecking at it.<sup>81</sup> This suggests a sophisticated reworking of an old model according to Henderson.<sup>82</sup> A deer in what appears to be a slain position also occurs in the Inchbrayock No.1 hunt.

Perhaps we see a scene closer to the original model at Eassie and thus at Aberlemno, Nigg and St.Andrews. Eassie and Kirriemuir may be placed in the same sequence of dating (9th century) as the Aberlemno, Meigle Class II monuments and the St.Andrews group above due to stylistic, sculptural similarities and geographical location. However, due to the 'reworking' of the model for the foot-hunter and the more awkward rendering of the figures in general, Kirriemuir is probably later than the Eassie cross-slab.

The Eassie hunter's hound is the last of the sequence of beasts which are arranged vertically one above the other to accommodate the long narrow shape of the panel containing them. Alcock interprets the beast below the stag as a heavily built dog.<sup>83</sup> It was common to use two types of hounds for hunting according to evidence from literary sources (for example, in Irish legal texts cited in Part Two the use of words *mílcon* and *archogacht*) and sculpture; a greyhound type and a heavy mastiff-like dog as on the cross-slabs at Dull and Gask.

We believe this creature to be a lion, similar to the lion pursued by *David the Warrior* at St.Andrews, the Aberlemno *David and Lion* and the *Vespasian Psalter* initial

of *David Rending the Lion's Jaws*. The sturdy hound at Kirriemuir may also be interpreted as a lion. This is a problem peculiar to Insular depictions of lions - they could well be interpreted as dogs being more canine than feline. The St.Andrews sarcophagus demonstrates this well showing the two types of models for lions available to the Pictish sculptor. The one being a classicising type of the *David Rending the Lion's Jaws* and David on horseback motifs; and the other, the heavy dog-like lion pursued by *David the Warrior*. This type of lion is also found in manuscript illumination such as the evangelist symbol of St.Mark page from the *Lindisfarne Gospels*.

The Eassie 'lion' has the heavy, square blunt head, rounded ears (hounds generally have triangular shaped ears) and stance of these representations of lions such as at Aberlemno. Lions in the *Vespasian Psalter*, *Book of Durrow* and *Lindisfarne Gospels* as well as the Clonmacnois examples also have similar features including rounded ears. The posture is the same as the Durrow lion, front legs on the ground, and back legs in a striding position. Other Pictish lions are depicted in this pose, as at Golspie, which also have lobate scroll joints like Eassie. Like the St.Andrews lion it has its tail between its legs (also a feature of the classical lions). The Kirriemuir slab also has a sturdy hound in contrast to the two greyhound type dogs near it which is similar to the Eassie 'lion'. The Eassie lion like the stag above it is adorned with scroll joints as is the *Lindisfarne Gospels* Lion Evangelist symbol.

If we interpret the Eassie and Kirriemuir beasts as lions, then it would accord well with the image of *David the Warrior* as seen at St.Andrews. The similarity in the types of hunter-warrior and the presence of a lion suggests that on both examples we also have a representation of David imagery. Whether we accept that this is a lion or a mastiff-like hound the Eassie and Kirriemuir compositions may still be understood in the terms of David imagery through relation to each other, Nigg and St.Andrews. The

Kirriemuir and Eassie chases then would have the same iconographical themes centred upon the imagery of David. The ambivalence of the nature of the hound/lion beast emphasises the deliberate interplay between secular and Christian interpretations of the hunt scene (the lion more readily associated with a religious interpretation and hound with the secular).

The major theme of the front of the Eassie and Kirriemuir monuments is a Christian one. This is indicated by the arrangement of the hunt composition about the dominant image on the slab, the large relief cross. The hunts at Eassie and Kirriemuir have not been separated from the cross by placing them on the reverse of the slab as is commonly done (ie. Hilton of Cadboll). By analogy to the St. Andrews and Nigg monuments, we suggest that the Eassie and Kirriemuir hunts represent David the hunter-warrior on foot. The Eassie and Kirriemuir David the hunter-warrior image combine the juxtaposition of Old and New Testament events within an overall theme of salvation and deliverance. Alcock suggests an alternative meaning for the Eassie-type hunt. If the stag represents Christ persecuted by demons, then the hunter figure may represent the devil.<sup>84</sup> The chase may then be a symbol of Christ's passion.<sup>85</sup>

The Eassie and Kirriemuir chases may depict a king or potentate hunting the monarchs of the animal world the lion and stag. Whether this was a particular king or general we shall never be able to discover. On Roman villa mosaic pavements a hunter often pursues beasts such as lions on foot. The hunt is made all the more dangerous by the fact that the hunter hunts on foot without companions only his hounds, an indication of the prowess and military might of the hunter who is equipped like a warrior.

The hunter-warrior is a popular figure in early Irish saga and myth such as *Cú Chulainn*, *Fingal mac Rónáin*, *Níall Noígíallach* or *Finn* and his *fíana*. The scale of the hunter figure and his proximity to the cross (only an important

personality and figure of Christian leadership as was David would be placed near the cross) mark him as an important person, perhaps a king or powerful local leader. The secular ideas of kingship represented here are also complementary to the religious theme at Eassie and Kirriemuir. As stressed above David was a *type* or *figura* of Christian kingship, whose leadership was sanctioned by the Lord and an the precedent to Christ's kingship on heaven and earth. The divine sanction of the Christian ruler may also be expressed here, a theme acceptable both in Christian and secular contexts.

The chase scene on the reverse of the Kirriemuir cross-slab may help support this identification. The horsemen wear draped clothing, a tunic with linear folds across the shoulders and a pleated skirt similar to Roman military attire. The lower rider also wears a cockaded Roman type helmet. They sport moustaches as do riders at Forteviot, Dupplin and Benvie. The moustache and beard suggest a man of mature years representative of the responsibilities of leadership. The men and horses are not drawn in true Pictish style<sup>86</sup> both being rather heavy in form and clumsily drawn, the top horse walks with all four legs on the ground and the bottom one rears rather than travelling in the stereotypical Pictish 'trot'. The uppermost horse is of the same type as seen at Dupplin and Benvie in its heaviness and leg action.

The fact that the hunt is separated from the Christian images of David and the Cross on the front by being placed on the reverse of the slab emphasises its secular interpretation deriving a Christian sense indirectly through association with the motifs on the front of the slab. The similarity in style to later sculpture suggests that Kirriemuir is a later sculpture than Eassie. The clumsiness of the equestrian figures in relation to other Class II riders (ie. Meigle, Aberlemno) also suggests that the Kirriemuir sculpture is later than its Eassie counterpart. As at Dupplin where the equestrian scene is



placed on another face of the cross to the *David Rending the Lion's Jaws*, at Kirriemuir the hunt is placed away from the David the Hunter-Warrior image.

While this chase can be interpreted as having a secular meaning and its own individual religious symbolism, the meaning of the monument as a whole should be considered. This suggests that the equestrian hunt scene at Kirriemuir may be interpreted as part of the David programme on the front of the monument. The stag is placed directly under the hooves of the horse above. Perhaps this is a symbol of triumph, the prey trampled beneath the horse's hooves as the defeated barbarian in Roman triumphal sculpture - an interpretation suggested by the attire of the Kirriemuir horseman which is similar to Imperial silver plate ruler-images as well as a slab from the Antonine Wall. This is also done to fit the stag into the limited space at the bottom of the slab.

A similar chase motif occurs upon Irish crosses in which the hunter also hunts on foot with his hounds. While close in conception to the Pictish scenes at Eassie and Kirriemuir these chases are unusual to Ireland having several variations on the theme. These foot hunts are placed upon the base of the cross and the hunters chase a menagerie of beasts. However, as at Eassie and Kirriemuir the hunter is on foot accompanied by hounds and his prey includes the stag.

During the period that these monuments were erected, as in later Medieval times, the hunt was the prerogative of the ruling class, that is the warrior classes. The hunter here is then also a warrior engaged in an activity to test his prowess during peace, the hunt. The hunter-warrior is a potent symbol of military might and status, ideals that are as much part of the Old Testament symbolism of David. Hunting alone with one's hounds on foot would have been a dangerous and noble feat.

The Cross of Patrick and Columba (South Cross), Kells, and Market Cross, Kells chase motifs are similar in



conception - a figure driving a group of boars, birds and other beasts lead by a stag. These scenes have been identified as *Noah Driving the Animals into the Ark*<sup>87</sup> although I would interpret them as hunts due to the presence of hounds, weapons, and beasts of the chase. On the Castledermot South Cross base is a variation of this composition. Two hunters, one above the other armed with spears, the lower also with a shield, drive a group of beasts ranged in three tiers. This cross belongs to the 9th-10th centuries.<sup>88</sup> The Kells examples are not accompanied on the base with other religious motifs although on the Castledermot base there is a *Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes*.

The similarity of these scenes - the same types of beasts and birds, hunters on foot and that the beasts appear to float in space, suggest common sources of inspiration (no doubt when two examples are from Kells). These elements are shared with Eassie and Kirriemuir suggesting that Ireland and Pictland may have shared common or parallel artistic models notably as these monuments are of a contemporary period.

This is also the type of chase frequently found in early Irish literature - the game drive. Drives of game are encountered frequently in early Irish saga and Fenian legend where the hunt takes place on foot with hounds. Stags, boars and birds are common prey of the hero such as Níall, Cú Chulainn and Finn who chase deer and/or birds. Although there is little to identify these Irish chases with King David as on some Pictish examples, the Christian symbolism of the chase must remain a variant of possible iconographical meaning. We must also recognise the association of the chase with kingship within early Celtic literary sources as an important aspect of the motif's interpretation.

iii) Later Pictish David Iconography:

This grouping includes certain Class III monuments on which David motifs are found in association with equestrian figures. The two primary examples are the Aldbar cross-slab (Angus) and the free-standing cross at Dupplin (Perthshire). The form of the *David Rending the Lion's Jaws* motif is significantly different from the monuments discussed earlier. The Aldbar<sup>89</sup> and Dupplin (Pl.7) monuments are of later date to those above, lacking symbols, and probably dating to the later 9thC or 10th century. The Dupplin cross is not as straightforwardly Pictish in nature being a monument of the period after the unification between Picts and Scots and having stylistic features in common with Irish monuments. Aldbar and Dupplin are dated to the 9th-10th centuries.<sup>90</sup>

Two further monuments, the Menmuir No.1 (Angus) and Dunblane No.1 (Perthshire)<sup>91</sup>, can cautiously be linked to Davidic imagery. The equestrian figure upon these examples is not associated with accepted David motifs as are the Dupplin and Aldbar horsemen. However, there are features of the equestrian motifs on Menmuir and Dunblane that may identify these figures with Davidic imagery.

The motifs chosen to complete the Aldbar and Dupplin iconographic programmes are different from those monuments above although *David and the Lion* remains a dominant image. On both monuments the *David Rending the Lion's Jaws* differs from earlier examples, being in profile. The Dupplin lion and figure are disposed as at Aldbar except that David faces to the left.<sup>92</sup> Henderson suggests that this type of the image may derive from the image of Heracles wrestling with the Nemean lion.<sup>93</sup> David on horseback may serve as a *David the Warrior* and king in this scheme. On Aldbar the ram attribute placed just behind the rider and close proximity to the *David and Lion* motif indicate that the horseman is David, as at St.Andrews. The Dupplin horseman however is unaccompanied by attributes associated with David images.

The Aldbar horseman is mounted on the characteristic high-stepping Pictish horse whereas that on Dupplin has all four feet on the ground. Both types of horse function as symbols rather than naturalistic images. The Aldbar horse conforms to the formulaic type typical of Pictish Class II sculpture. The Dupplin horse is not realistic being typical of the declined type of horse of Class III sculpture. We believe that the Aldbar and Dupplin horsemen are symbols of royal power. The moustache of the Dupplin horseman may indicate that he is of higher status than the clean-shaven warriors below.<sup>94</sup> That he is also placed above them on horseback emphasises this idea of relative status. That the Dupplin horseman is placed on a cruciform monument also emphasises its religious nature as an image as well as any possible secular symbolism.

The Dupplin Cross and Aldbar cross-slab appear less dependent on the St. Andrews sarcophagus type programme and have simpler imagery. Two scenes of David imagery appear on Dupplin, *David the Harpist* and *David Rending the Lion's Jaws*. The mounted warrior on Dupplin may be associated with the imagery accorded to David on St. Andrews, Nigg and Aberlemno No.3. As Alcock suggests, the Dupplin David images may be "icons of a divinely sanctioned king"<sup>95</sup> which complements the idea of a horseman as a secular symbol of royal power. Four foot soldiers armed with spears and shields are placed below the horseman who is also attired for battle. According to Alcock this display of martial prowess may present a military sanction for kingship reinforcing its ecclesiastical justification.<sup>96</sup>

This may well represent the theme of divine kingship and victory illustrated by images of power and military might. Such images as we have seen may derive ultimately from Roman Imperial triumphal art depicting a mounted victorious general and soldiers on foot. The secular theme of kingship and military victory complements Christian ideas of kingship and triumph. Alcock suggests that the Dupplin horseman and warriors may represent a dynasty or

potentate that had divine right on their side.<sup>97</sup> He goes further to suggest that at Dupplin we have a statement of the divine right of the Mac Alpin dynasty to their victory over the Pictish kingdoms and the "biblical" proof of kings like David to emphasise this right - a victory parade of sorts.<sup>98</sup> Two images from the life of King David make reference to a biblical king implying, obliquely, the divine right of the new dynasty.<sup>99</sup>

This is interesting when the close proximity of the Dupplin Cross to the royal residence of Forteviot associated with Kenneth Mac Alpin is considered. The Dupplin Cross overlooks Forteviot where Alcock suggests a Pictish royal residence was established in the 7th or 8th century.<sup>100</sup> The Scottish take-over of the Pictish kingdom resulted in the taking over of this already existing power centre. The indications that a church was founded at Forteviot perhaps by one of Mac Alpin's sons could be interpreted as an "affirmation of the new royal power".<sup>101</sup> The cross provided a public statement of this power.

Not only may the equestrian figures on Aldbar and Dupplin be associated with David imagery but with the symbolism of Christian kingship. A monument like Dupplin situated near a royal residence is a public and monumental statement of kingship and power. Alcock suggests that a symbolic basis for Mac Alpin's rule was provided by such a monument.<sup>102</sup>

Two horsemen appear upon the Menmuir cross-slab, one above the other, and a single rider adorns the Dunblane slab. The uppermost Menmuir horseman wears a robe with drapery indicated by stylised linear folds, carries a round bossed shield and sword and wears his hair in the characteristic Pictish 'pony-tail'. To the right of his head is a beast with its legs folded beneath its body. Although, the beast is long-necked and deer-like, it is placed in the position accepted for the ram attribute of David (i.e. St. Andrews sarcophagus). His attire, weaponry and long-hair style is consistent with the previous David

images as horseman, warrior and lion render.

However, this scene may merely represent a 'simple' chase. The beast with folded legs could represent the slain prey much as upon Inchbrayock No.1. The lower horseman carries a round-bossed shield but is not distinguished by a robe, placing him in an inferior relationship to the upper rider who is also of larger size. The lower rider is followed by a figure on foot holding a round-headed staff. This figure is placed in a similar position to the side of the scene like the cymbal and trumpet players of the Davidic elaborate chases at Aberlemno and Nigg. These features may associate the Menmuir chase with earlier Pictish David cycles. Menmuir is a later example, especially notable is the relative degeneration of the equestrian form - straightened lifted foreleg, lop-ears and heavy heads of the horses similar to the horses at Inchbrayock.

At Menmuir we may have either a vague representation of Davidic equestrian motifs as upon earlier examples or a composition borrowing something of the nature of earlier examples. It may be a "cut" from the fuller iconographical programmes of other David monuments. Unfortunately, no accepted David motifs occur on the front or reverse of Menmuir to make the identification with David as at Dupplin or Aldbar. Similarities to the Inchbrayock No.1 cross-slab (also in Angus) in style, composition and degenerative features suggest that Menmuir may simply be a later example of the chase motif drawing upon other monuments in the region for influence.

Likewise, Dunblane may tentatively be associated with Davidic imagery. The horseman is armed with a spear and behind him is the David attribute of the harp. Also, there is a figure on foot holding a staff as at Menmuir, but he is placed in a different position. Again, the horseman may be a vague reference to the David equestrian image.



## iv) Clonmacnois Hunt Group:

The hunt subjects of the Irish Clonmacnois group of crosses are in many ways similar to the hunts of their Pictish counterparts and serve as important parallels. Clonmacnois (Co.Offaly) was founded in the 6th century by St.Ciaran and endowed by the "high" king.<sup>103</sup> The type of monument and style of decoration suggests they were all products of one workshop and made during a relatively brief time.<sup>104</sup> These crosses can be dated to about 800AD, on stylistic and historical grounds, strengthened by the Bealin inscription referring to Túathgall, an abbot of Clonmacnois who died about 810.<sup>105</sup> This is the period to which St.Andrews, Hilton of Cadboll and other Pictish hunts associated with Davidic imagery belong.

The Clonmacnois crosses however, can not be claimed to be directly associated with David imagery. David motifs, such as *David and the Lion* or *David as Musician* are found on Irish high cross sculpture, but not upon these examples. What is important concerning the Clonmacnois examples as parallels, is that the West Shaft and Banagher Shaft show equestrian lion hunts in a setting of primarily Christian emphasis.

Many elements of the Clonmacnois chases suggest that their sculptors were familiar with Pictish cross-slab hunt motifs.<sup>106</sup> The placing of the compositional features in a vertical column, was a new element in Irish carving, one already used by the Picts in the placement of symbols or beasts in panels beside the cross.<sup>107</sup> The elements of the Pictish chase may also be placed vertically as at Scoonie or Largo (the deer in these examples are also stags as in Irish hunts, bearing antlers). The hunt figures at Clonmacnois are linked together by the device of biting or intertwined limbs, linked in a diagonally stressed pattern, the hound seizing a deer by the leg.<sup>108</sup> Pictish hunts and equestrian processions often have a diagonal compositional stress (ie.monuments of Meigle).

The Clonmacnois hunts also share artistic associations



with two major Columban foundations, Iona and Kells. Adomnán's *Life of Columba* records Columba's visit to Clonmacnois during the abbacy of Ailither (586-99), suggesting some kind of relationship between the *paruchia* of Columba and St.Ciaran, which is why this visit was recorded.<sup>109</sup> Many of the chase and equestrian motifs of the Irish milieu appear on the Clonmacnois, Kells and Killamery crosses. Stylistic similarities between these crosses may be seen in the light of the comparative geographical proximity to Clonmacnois.<sup>110</sup> Only in Ireland are hunts and equestrian motifs found in a comparable number to Pictland within the Insular world.

Two examples, the West Shaft and Banagher Shaft, illustrate lion hunts in a religious context. The chase on all examples is placed upon the shaft of the cross. This is the area on an Irish cross where Old and New Testament scenes are most generally placed, more secular or ambivalent subjects usually confined to the base of the cross. The Bealin cross while depicting a stag hunt is associated with the two lions on its east and south faces. These chase scenes are similar in conception, the chase arranged in a linear fashion within a long panel. Banagher has the dual subject of lion and stag hunt as do the Pictish examples of Eassie and Kirriemuir.

Lions dominate as a choice of subject on the Bealin (Pl.8), Banagher and Clonmacnois shafts.<sup>111</sup> The lions have floriated tails curling over their backs, a canine appearance, and manes loosely indicated. The lion represented aspects of Christ in the later Early Medieval bestiaries copied from classical authors, in particular the Resurrection.<sup>112</sup> According to *Physiologus*, lion cubs are born dead and revived by their sire's breath. The lion was originally adopted into Christian symbolism from its appearance in Near Eastern art. Its appearance in 8th century Ireland and Pictland, is an entirely new feature belonging to Christian iconography, resulting from contacts with Late Antique art.<sup>113</sup>

These lions share native roots as well. The canine head, rounded ears, and pose are similar to Pictish lions (ie. Eassie, Golspie). They also have features familiar from the Book of Durrow evangelist lion as do Pictish examples with lobate scroll joints and no mane. The model for the Durrow lion may have been such a Pictish beast, that only after being accepted as a lion acquired a mane<sup>114</sup> and may suggest why the lion is so easily confused with the hound in Insular sculpture. Pictish lions at St.Andrews, Eassie, and Aberlemno have their tails between their legs. However, that at St.Andrews does have a similarly tufted tail. Lions with tails curled over their backs occur in manuscripts such as in the Book of Durrow and on Pictish sculpture at Papil and Bressay.

Hicks suggests that the horseman at Banagher is an ecclesiastic as he carries a crozier instead of a spear, and that the lines around his neck may represent a book satchel.<sup>115</sup> The West Shaft rider does not appear to carry weapons. Mounted clerics or at least weaponless horsemen are found in the *Book of Kells* and Pictish cross-slabs and are of the same type. The horsemen appear to have cowled tunics or thrown back hoods like the *Book of Kells* equestrians. The Papil and Bressay lions are also associated with cowled clerics and hooded riders are found upon the St.Madoes cross-slab in Pictland. Both horsemen are very like the Pictish equestrian, riding in the same seat upon high-stepping steeds with proudly arching necks. The horses however, are slightly more awkward than the Pictish examples, the West Shaft horse being relatively elongated.

When combined with the horsemen the lions obviously are part of a symbolic image. Hicks suggests that these scenes represent the souls of the sinner being caught by Christ like a stag hunt may.<sup>116</sup> As these hunts are placed on the cross shaft and not the base, and that the Banagher rider carries a crozier suggest that the symbolic emphasis here is Christian. There are no other images to suggest

the meaning of these hunts. However, it may be suggested that the presence of the lions and a horseman similar to Pictish David hunt images may indicate that the horseman may indeed represent David. This is worth considering when it is taken into account that these Irish chase examples are of the same period as the Pictish lion hunts - the Pictish examples being about early 9th century in date. The stag has its foot caught in what appears to be a trap. Trapping of deer is described in length in old Irish legal commentary (see Part Two-Chapter 2.1).

The Bealin cross chase scene although a stag hunt is placed in a similar position to the Banagher and the West Shaft chases. The association with lions on the east face and south arm of the cross, relates the Bealin stag hunt to the Banagher and Clonamcnois West shafts. The rider holds a spear and the triquetra knot just above the horse's haunches may act as an attribute identifying the rider as a cleric.<sup>117</sup> However, Hicks points out that this device is frequently used in an ornamental fashion to fill in space (i.e. Killamery and Carndonagh crosses, Meigle No.1, Aberlemno No.2).<sup>118</sup> The horseman is very Pictish in its features, and the horse of the same type as the characteristic Pictish equine, especially those from Angus and Perth (Aberlemno, Rossie Priory, Meigle for example).

## 2.2. Stag Chase Scenes on Irish Crosses:

A small group of Irish crosses display hunt motifs which are of a more obvious Christian iconographical significance. These examples generally include the stag as one of the animals pursued. Their closest parallels are to be found in Pictland. However, these are not direct parallels. Three types of chases are apparent:

- i) game drives conducted by hunters on foot;
- ii) Horsemen pursuing game including a stag or lion;
- iii) chase upon an arm of the cross-head.

i) *Game Drives*: The Kells Market Cross and Cross of SS Patrick and Columba, Co.Meath; Cross of Scriptures, Clonmacnois; Castledermot, Co.Kildare; Muiredach's Cross, Monasterboice, Co.Louth; Oldcourt base, Co.Wicklow and Roscrea pillar, Co.Tipperary are characterised by game drive type hunts. The Kells, Monasterboice and Cross of Scriptures crosses are scripture crosses which reflect an artistic and iconographical development of the first half of the 9th century according to Harbison.<sup>1</sup> The other examples mentioned are likely of the mid 9th century and Roscrea is a later example of about the 12th century.<sup>2</sup>

A hunt scene occurs upon the north face of the base of the Market Cross shaft, Kells (Pl. 9). On the right a man bearing a staff appears to drive various animals to the left - a hound, a bird, a (?)dog, a lion with a hound above its back, a deer, a boar and another deer.<sup>3</sup> On the south side of the Cross of Scriptures' base in the lower panel (Pl.10a), two men with two hounds in front of them, pursue two deer. The deer nearest the centre of the scene, turns its head and appears to be pierced by a spear.<sup>4</sup> The north face of the Cross of Scriptures base also has a game drive (Pl.10b).

On the east face of the Cross of SS Patrick and Columba (Pl.11), a man with a spear in his left hand and a bossed shield in his extended right hand, pursues a hare, a bird, a (?)lion with a boar above it, and a stag with two hounds.<sup>5</sup> The west face of the Castledermot South Cross base

hunt scene comprises a man with a shield on his back, holding a spear and chasing two beasts, one above the other, likely his hounds, as well as a hare and a deer. Above, another figure holding a sword hunts a boar and a bird(Pl.12).<sup>6</sup>

A very worn hunt scene is on the north side of the Roscrea-Pillar of which all that can be made out is a man to the right with a spear over his shoulder and a beast to the left. Harbison suggests that this may be a hunting scene of the type found upon the bases of some High Crosses.<sup>7</sup> On the Cross of Muiredach west face of the base in the upper register, a man to the right pursues a large bird, a boar and a deer. Although the details are worn, Harbison suggests that the Kells Market Cross scene gives an idea of what this scene may have looked like originally.<sup>8</sup> On the south face of the Oldcourt base in the lower panel, a figure with a stick on the left with a hound beneath and others in front of him, pursues two beasts, perhaps lions.<sup>9</sup>

Stag and lion hunts are of Christian iconographical value as part of an overall iconographical scheme of salvation and deliverance on a scriptural cross including Old and New Testament motifs on this theme. The baptismal imagery of the stag and stag hunt would also be an important part of the symbolism. As mentioned earlier the drive hunt occurs frequently within early Irish literature.

The huntsmen of the Cross of Scriptures, Cross of SS Patrick and Columba and Castledermot South hunt with two hounds. Early Irish heroes and kings are associated with extraordinary couples of hounds capable of pursuing natural and supernatural prey. For example, Finn's hounds Bran and Sceolang and Mael Fothartaig's hounds Doilín and Dathlenn in *Fingal Rónáin*. Two hounds also appear in the stag chase motifs of the *Utrecht Psalter*, hinting at a Christian significance for this feature - hounds as persecutors. Within early Irish and Welsh hagiography the hound also appears as a persecutor when hunting. However, we may also



understand the drive chase and hounds in light of the symbolism evident from early literary sources discussed in Part Two. The sculptured hunters can be connected with the heroism and kingly ideals of these tales. The hound as a highly valued attribute marking a kingly and heroic figure's prestige.

The stag hunt is unusual on the Cross of Scriptures, depicting the moment of the kill, not the pursuit of the chase as is usual. Similar scenes are encountered upon Roman villa mosaics. The Banagher cross also depicts the stag as it is caught (in a trap) as do a few Pictish examples. For example, Kirriemuir illustrates the stag under the horse's hooves, and a deer has its legs folded up as in death at Inchbrayock. Perhaps the death of the stag represents the victory of Christ over the souls he pursues or even the death of Christ himself, as the stag is a symbol of Christ.

ii) *Mounted Hunts*: Horsemen course game, including the stag and lion as previously seen at Clonmacnois and on Pictish cross-slabs. Ahenny South (Co.Tipperary) and the fragmentary cross at Moone (Co.Kildare) also depict mounted hunts. The Ahenny crosses are generally considered to belong to the earliest group of Irish crosses (early 9th century) and those at Moone of the mid 9th-10th centuries.

The figural scenes of Ahenny South are confined to the base (Pl.13), the cross itself being ornamented. Upon the south side of the base the hunt is divided into two panels by a moulding lying vertically down the middle of the panel in the shape of a square-armed cross. Presumably, this is an indication of the religious significance of this scene. On the left-hand panel two horsemen move to the right and there appears to be two beasts in the upper part.<sup>10</sup> A horseman appears in the bottom right-hand panel with two beasts in front, one above the other. The upper beast has its tail above its back in the manner of the Insular lion. What appears to be a small hound is behind it.<sup>11</sup>

The presence of the hunt on a base also supporting

scenes of *Daniel in the Lions' Den* and the *Fall of Man* would emphasise the Christian interpretation of this motif, although its secular importance should not be ignored. Here we find the hunt acting as a religious motif recalling the theme of salvation and deliverance invoked by the other images upon the cross base. If we regard the beasts as lions, then an even more powerful Christian image is created, although it is difficult to identify the scene with David imagery.

A further hunt appears on the west face of the Ahenny South base. Although very worn, a horseman appears to pursue various beasts with a companion on foot.<sup>12</sup> A third hunt is on the north side on either side of a central ringed cross. On the left, a horseman, facing away from the cross, has various animals above and behind him and on the right, two horsemen move towards the cross, while a figure with a hound in front of it is placed above.<sup>13</sup>

A possible chase scene is to be found upon the fragmentary cross at Moone. On the east face, a horseman raising his right hand is placed in a panel between a hound leaping onto a stag's back, and another with a (?)lion or large dog with its tail between its legs.<sup>14</sup>

iii) *Chases on Cross Arms*: The crosses at Dromiskin, Co.Louth; Killamery, Co.Kilkenny and Kilree, Co.Kilkenny are unusual as the stag chase is placed upon an arm of the cross rather than the base or shaft as is the general practice. This positioning of the hunt is not found on Pictish or Scottish examples until the period of West Highland sculpture. The positioning of the hunt on a cross arm makes clear the religious intent of their symbolism in the cross' iconographical programme. This suggests that the hunt was used in Insular contexts as a Christian motif, supporting the claim that the hunt could be used on Pictish examples in the same manner.

On the south arm of the east face of Dromiskin (Pl.14), a horseman with a spear pursues a stag accompanied by his hound.<sup>15</sup> Dromiskin is closer to Monasterboice and

Kells, important centres of Irish cross sculpture rich in chase imagery, than Killamery and Kilree. At Killamery (Pl.15) a mounted hunter pursues a stag with a hound leaping on to its back on the north arm of the cross west face<sup>16</sup> and upon the east face of the cross arms at Kilree there is hunting scene of the same type.<sup>17</sup>

At Killamery this Christian image of the hunt is further reinforced by being placed in close association with a Crucifixion - Christ's sacrifice on the Cross for mankind and the promise of salvation through baptism and victory over death. Both the Killamery and the Kilree crosses bear David imagery emphasising an iconographical theme of deliverance and salvation implied by the cross and the hunt motifs along with other Old Testament found in an early Irish text, *Martyrology of Oengus* in a prayer known as the *Commendatio animae*, seeking God's help (ie. *Daniel in the Lions' Den* at Kilree).<sup>18</sup> Killamery and Kilree are located close to one another which may suggest the reason for the similarity of their iconographical programmes.

The stag hunt on these crosses is on the cross-head, the visual centre of the cross and thereby directly associated with the symbolism of the cross. As discussed in Part One, the stag hunt can be a Christian symbol of salvation, deliverance and baptism. Also, the pursued stag could represent Christ, an image often used to symbolise Christ's pursuit of souls. By placing a motif associated with the secular symbolism of kingship encountered within early Celtic tradition, this role of the elite of society could be legitimised.

### 2.3. The Falconry Group of Cross-slabs:

There are three extant Pictish monuments adorned with a horseman holding a hawk on his forearm. The Elgin Cathedral<sup>slab</sup> (Class II, Morayshire) and St. Andrews sarcophagus horseman and hawk are part of a chase composition, whilst that at Fowlis Wester is part of a procession of horsemen. The uppermost rider at Meigle No.2 may have once held a hawk, and like Fowlis Wester is part of an equestrian cavalcade. The Elgin and Fowlis Wester slabs are likely of the 9th-10th century <sup>1</sup> dating perhaps to the mid 9th century.

The introduction of falconry to British sculpture points to influence from the East. It appears that falconry was a novelty introduced from the East into Europe during the early centuries after Christ.<sup>2</sup> The earliest extant European evidence of the sport is a floor mosaic at Argos, Greece, depicting hunting with a falcon.<sup>3</sup> The earliest literary evidence for falconry comes from Persia and Asia as a passage from Xenophon (Cyropaedia 6.39) appears to suggest.<sup>4</sup> By the 5th century hawking was a common practice in Arabia and Persia.

The few pictorial representations of falconry and its treatment as a marvel in the ancient European world suggests that the sport was not widely practised. Falconry was probably introduced to Europe by the Visigoths who invaded the Mediterranean around 400AD before settling in the West.<sup>5</sup> The new sport was then adopted by the Romans or Romanised ruling classes who settled in southern Gaul.<sup>6</sup> The earliest reference to hawking in the Early Christian period is in *Eucharisticos* (ca.459) by Paulinus of Pella who wishes to possess a swift hound and splendid hawk described as one of the pleasures of wealthy youths of the time.<sup>7</sup>

The German Franks had regulations referring to falconry in the *Lex Salica* (c.500) confirming that the sport was well-established by 500.<sup>8</sup> The Burgundian Laws (ca.500-505), Laws of the Riparian Franks (ca.530-570), and Langobardian Laws (c.643) established a hierarchy of

finer according to different types of hawk for theft or killing of the bird, the latter mentioning the practice in relation to royal forests.<sup>9</sup> These laws are associated with the kings responsible for their drafting and the mention of the royal forest confirms the royal nature of the sport.

Although hawking is much illustrated in Medieval art and literature, little is known of when it first appeared in the West, the earliest European treatise on the subject being by Emperor Frederick II De arte venandi cum avibus (around 1250).<sup>10</sup> The earliest evidence of falconry from the British Isles appears to be Anglo-Saxon. The Sutton Hoo treasure contained a large amount of Byzantine silver and Coptic bronzes.<sup>11</sup> Hicks suggests that an import like the Coptic bowl from Sutton Hoo, similar to others found in Anglo-Saxon contexts and on the Continent and decorated with hunting and animal combat scenes typical of Late Roman art with falconry motifs like that at Argos may have served as a model for the birds on the Sutton Hoo purse lid.<sup>12</sup> The reason for the use of the bird of prey in such a treasure may have been as a symbol of the noble sport of falconry.<sup>13</sup>

The earliest representation of falconry itself in an Insular context comes from Pictland such as the cross-slab from Elgin Cathedral (Pl.16).<sup>14</sup> Sculpture like Elgin, Fowlis Wester<sup>15</sup>, and the St. Andrews sarcophagus illustrating mounted hawking shows "that the social significance of hawking was well recognized in northern Britain by the 8thC."<sup>16</sup> That the sport of falconry was practised by the Anglo-Saxons, has royal connections, and hawks were prized as gifts between secular and ecclesiastical potentates.<sup>17</sup> This is suggested by a letter sent by King Ethelbert of Kent to Boniface, Archbishop of Mainz. Ethelbert requests from Boniface a pair of falcons as there are few such fine birds capable of producing offspring and trained for hunting crows in Kent.<sup>18</sup>

Mercian and West Saxon charters of the 8th and 9th centuries set out the obligations of the greater landlords



to make provision for the royal huntsmen, their servants, horses, hounds and hawks, showing the continuing association with royalty of the sport.<sup>19</sup> Asser describes King Alfred as practising every branch of hunting and instructing his falconers, hawkers and dog-trainers throughout the Viking troubles and ill health.<sup>20</sup> Falconry developed into a highly specialised and sophisticated sport with several species being trained and a hierarchy of birds set up according to the social rank that could own them.

The Elgin scene is an example of a hunt motif placed on the reverse of a monument without any obvious Christian motifs in association with it to lend it an immediate religious interpretation. The hart and hound at Elgin may strengthen its Christian associations. A Christian understanding is given indirectly by the cross on the front of the slab. Curle interprets the horseman with the hawk as a representation of David<sup>21</sup> as at St.Andrews, where the horseman also holds a hawk. At Elgin, the hound following the rider leaps up behind him in the same position as the small hound at Hilton of Cadboll. It does appear as Henderson points out that the Elgin sculptor "seems to have known models which belong to David iconography. No other David cycle contains such an image and yet the connection with the David figure on the Sarcophagus is explicit."<sup>22</sup>

This may also apply to Fowlis Wester. The uppermost horseman on both bear a falcon, his position indicating his status. The image of a mounted falconer at Elgin and Fowlis Wester may well have derived from such models as inspired the falconry images at St.Andrews. The Elgin slab appears to be a later Class II example due to the developments in the drawing of the horsemen perhaps being close in date to St.Andrews. However, due to the lack of identifiable David motifs, these chases most likely have a primarily secular tone, with ancillary Christian symbolism derived from the cross on the front of the slab.

The Elgin chase is most simply a representation of a powerful noble or magnate hunting and hawking with his

three companions at arms. What part the hawk/falcon played in a stag hunt is problematic, besides bird or hare coursing on the way. The hawk/falcon here is included primarily as a mark of status and wealth; a "vignette" of prestige according to Alcock.<sup>23</sup> Like horses, these birds must be specially bred, raised, trained, fed and housed and are expensive to maintain. As Alcock points out during the Middle Ages there was a whole hierarchy of birds of prey appropriate to different societal ranks.<sup>24</sup> We can already see something of this system in early Welsh law. Falcons were luxury gifts often exchanged between heads of state and even prominent churchmen in Britain and on the Continent during this period.

Falconry or hawking attained its most widespread popularity during the Middle Ages in Western Europe as an aristocratic pastime. The hawk was used as much for its symbol of status as it was as a method of hunting. Hawks were categorised into a groups depending on what rank of aristocrat was able to own a specific type of hunting bird in various treatises on hawking. The early Welsh *Laws of Hywel Dda* shows the Western practice of reserving certain types of hawks for royalty as well as including the prestigious post of Chief Falconer in the court. Hawks were used to hunt other birds such as wild duck, geese, herons or pigeons or were carried along upon stag hunts.

That the type of bird of prey used by the Anglo-Saxons and the Picts may be the falcon is suggested by representations of birds of prey using their beaks to assist its talons in the kill, a habit peculiar to the falcon, such as the eagle and fish on St.Vigeans No.1.<sup>25</sup> Falcons are often shown carried upon the wrist of a horseman in Pictish contexts such as the St.Andrews sarcophagus or Elgin Cathedral cross-slab. In both examples the falconer is involved in hunting animals such as the deer. There is no evidence of the falcon being used for hunting birds upon Pictish or Irish sculpture, and they are probably included as prestige symbols or even markers of

the status of the falconer.

Examples of mounted falconers are also found upon Viking-age sculpture in north England such as upon a shaft fragment from Sockburn (approx. 10th century).<sup>26</sup> For example, on Sockburn No. 3, Co. Durham (first half 10th century), the rider holds a falcon on his extended left hand and has a drooping moustache as at Dupplin and Forteviot No. 4 (10th century).<sup>27</sup> However, the falcon is not in profile as on Pictish examples, but frontal with wings extended.<sup>28</sup> The figure suggested to represent St. John and his symbol, the Eagle on the Bewcastle cross (7th or 8th century), is an interesting representation of a standing figure with a hawk on his wrist and perch beside him. Hawking also figures in the Bayeux Tapestry in which Harold is illustrated setting off for France with a hawk on his wrist and his hounds, and William bears a hawk presumably a gift from Harold who was rescued by the Duke of Normandy, confirming the royal status of falconry.<sup>29</sup>

References to the hawk occur in the early Irish glossaries. In the *Sanas Cormaic*, there is an entry for *seig* meaning hawk.<sup>30</sup> The entry under *seig* in *O'Davoren's Glossary*, expands upon this, implying that the hawk is able to carry off a lapdog and as much as the clutch of eggs of one hen.<sup>31</sup> The word for hawk is often used as a laudatory term for a warrior. For example *Cú Chulainn* is described as a *seig a marbtha* (hawk of death). In the story of the *Death of the Sons of Uisnech*, in which Deidre laments the death of her husband she describes Naisi (her husband) and his two brothers, "Their three hounds, and their three hawks (*sebhaic*)/Will henceforth be without hunters (*selga*)-/The three who upheld every battle,/Three fosterlings of Conall the Victorious."<sup>32</sup> This is a clear reference to the use of the hawk for hunting and as the possession of young warriors of standing along with their hounds. In the early Irish law tract of the *Senchas Mor*, under *Breatha Comaithcesa*, the keeping of "pet" animals and their "smacht"-fine for their trespasses are set out. This

includes pet deer as well as "old birds" (*seineoin*) defined as hawks (*sebaicc*).<sup>33</sup>

Early Welsh laws are much more detailed in reference to the hawk. In the *Laws of Hywel Dda*, the Chief Falconer (*Penhebogydd*) of the court is fourth in the king's household.<sup>34</sup> The worth of hawks is set out in these laws under the "Value of the Wild and Tame" according to rank of the owner, type of bird, its age and training.<sup>35</sup> The status of the owner of a hawk is clearly reflected in the value assigned to the bird. The laws concerning falconry probably reflect Anglo-Saxon and Continental hawking practices in their hierarchical arrangement of hawk ownership and hawking practices such as the mews and equipment, gloves and jesses.

The mounted falconers on Pictish cross-slabs appear to be prestige symbols demarcating the royal status of the man carrying the hawk on his wrist. This makes sense in the context of the Elgin cross-slab where the rider carrying the hawk is the largest and placed in the top central position of the composition. Also at St. Andrews, the falconer may well be a representation of King David. The falcon is carried by the foremost of two riders abreast on Fowlis Wester, perhaps here the bird is being carried for the larger rider placed above by an associate or servant. Christian interpretation is far more obscure and likely its religious meaning is to be derived from the interpretation of the hunt scene as a whole. After all, the Pictish falconry motifs are all part of larger chase compositions in which a deer or lion is the quarry.

The hawk as a bird used for hunting, only occasionally makes an appearance in early Irish literature or law tracts. In early Welsh law, the hawk is more prevalent and the types of hawk are arranged in a hierarchy of ownership. The bird of prey is also encountered used to hunt other birds such as the duck. Sparrow hawk bones were found at North Elmham and Thetford (Norfolk), probably from birds used for hawking, a common sport and method of catching

birds in the Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>36</sup> It is not inconceivable that the appearance of the hawk on Pictish sculpture and occasionally in literary sources, is as much as a symbol of prestige and wealth, as a practical portrayal of hunting. Hawks were given as gifts between notable personages, and it is possible that a trained bird came into the possession of a Pictish or Irish aristocrat in this manner. However, from all appearances, the use of the hawk in the hunt of the Irish and Picts of our period was comparatively rare.



#### 2.4. Hunt Scenes without Direct Christian Association:

This iconographical group includes those monuments with chase scenes without direct association with a known Christian motif on the same face of the slab or cross. Unlike the monuments discussed earlier, these chase motifs are not accompanied by other Christian images such as David and the Lion. This has caused the secular meaning to be emphasised over any Christian interpretation. Christian significance is implied by the Christian symbolism associated with the chase motif, indirectly by the cross and other Christian motifs upon a slab or cross.

This group includes the monuments of:

Inchbrayock Nos.1,3 (Class II, Angus; 9th-10thC<sup>1</sup>)  
 Monifieth No.3 (Class II, Angus)  
 Kirriemuir No.2 (Class II, Angus)  
 Largo (Class II, Fife)  
 Scoonie (Class II, Fife)  
 Mugdrum (Class III, Fife)  
 Tullibole (Class III, Kinross and Clackmannan).

The Largo, Scoonie and Mugdrum cross-slabs are all from the area of Fife, of similar style, and have stags as the object of the chase. These chases are of a more pared down or simple type than the more elaborate hunts such as Hilton of Cadboll and share similarities with Irish cross stag hunts (Pl.17).

In consideration of the model needed for such an image, the simplified nature of the hunt, and degenerative features these monuments likely belong to the mid 9th century. This may indicate a psalter type model as a source of imagery, especially in the case of Mugdrum in which two hounds pursue the stag. The use of an antlered stag may also suggest a 9th century dating in keeping with a possible psalter model like *Utrecht*. Two hounds pursue a hart in the *Utrecht Psalter* hart and hound motifs. Two hounds also pursue deer in other Pictish examples of the deer and hound motif. Christian symbolism may be derived through the symbol of the hart and hound and its psalmic associations. Psalm 90 of the *Utrecht Psalter* is accompanied by an illustration of a horseman and two hounds

pursuing a stag attacked by another hound. The presence of three hounds on Pictish examples may also indicate psalmic imagery.

The Kirriemuir No.2 stag chase may also derive Christian significance in reference to the hunt on the front of the slab.<sup>2</sup> The foot-hunter and equestrian hunter appear together on other examples associated with David imagery. A connection to Davidic imagery for the Monifieth chase may be suggested if one interprets the hound as a lion. The mastiff-like hound behind the top rider has its tail between its hind-legs, and is posed like Insular lion types. However, its head is obliterated by breakage, rendering precise identification impossible. If a lion, then perhaps this may have once been a scene of Davidic imagery (Pl.18).

The Inchbrayock, Mugdrum and Tullibole monuments are later monuments than examples like Largo and Scoonie which have more in common with the form of equestrian and hunt upon St.Andrews. Mugdrum and Tullibole<sup>3</sup> are alike in sharing similar features of decline - lop-ears and awkwardly drawn leg action of the horses, rider too large for mount. These are also features of the Inchbrayock (Pl.19) and St.Madoes scenes.

Once again we encounter the hunt as a royal image symbolising one of the most noble and favoured pursuits of the aristocracy with its connotations of political, military and social power and wealth. Hunting is a definitive aspect of the good and powerful king such as the tale of the Old Testament ruler Nimrod in the early Irish text, *Auraicept na n-Éces*. In early Irish and Welsh hagiography this aspect is shown in a fashion that hints at the conflict between ecclesiastical and secular power. The hunt is associated with the power of the aristocracy but in a less than glorious light. The stag in these sources often serves a saint in a domestic manner associating the beast with well established Christian imagery.

## 2.5. Hart and Hound Motifs:

There are four extant sculptures depicting chases in which no horsemen or footmen are involved. These monuments display varied forms of the hart and hound motif:

St.Vigeans Nos.1 (Angus, Class II) and 8 (Class III)  
 Burghead No.7 (Morayshire, Class III)  
 Meigle No.12 (Perthshire, Class III).

The hart and hound motifs of St.Vigeans No.1 (Pl.20), Burghead No.7 and Meigle No.12 (Pl.21) are examples of the familiar type of image where the hound seizes a stag's leg or shoulder. St.Vigeans No.1 (originally fragment No.1a in ECMS) hart and hound is part of the reverse composition of the slab. It is the hart and hound at St.Vigeans that is of prime concern here, especially as it is separated by double-disc and Z-rod and Crescent symbols from the archery scene and is of larger scale.

The frieze arrangement of St.Vigeans No.8 (Pl.22) includes a large wolf-like hound chasing a stag and hind followed by a fawn. On Meigle No.12 a hound seizes the near hind-leg of a fleeing stag as part of the sculptural programme of a recumbent monument.

Burghead No.7 has a similar composition to St.Vigeans No.1 - a hound leaping across the stag's back to seize its shoulder while a second hound seizes the stag's neck from below. Two hounds leap across the stag's back at St.Vigeans, the larger seizing the stag's shoulder. This hart and hound scene although separated from the hunt composition below by a series of symbols is to be linked symbolically with the lower scene (crossbow stalker hunt). Burghead No.7 is a fragment and at one time formed part of a cross-slab and perhaps a larger hunt composition.

We are familiar with the iconographical significance of the hart and hound motif discussed in Part One. It is important to recall the Christian symbolism associated with the hart and hound as linked to psalmic imagery and also as a motif of animal conflict. The deer upon these monuments bear antlers relating them to later Pictish hunts and Irish stag chases strengthening the suggestion of psalter models.

### Chapter 3 - The Equestrian Motif:

#### 3.1.- The Rossie Priory Cross-slab Group:

This iconographical grouping of cross-slabs includes those examples illustrating an unusual composition. The equestrian figures are placed in conjunction with a large relief cross on the front or reverse of the cross-slab. This composition includes horseman set within the cross shaft as well as flanking it. The primary equestrian figure is contained within the lower arm of the cross-head or in a semi-circular field beneath the cross. There are four cross-slabs in this group:

- i) Rossie Priory (Class II, Perthshire)
- ii) Fordoun (Class II, Kincardineshire)
- iii) Balluderon (Class II, Angus)
- iv) Edderton (Class III, Ross and Cromarty).

On Fordoun and Edderton some of the riders carry weapons. Perhaps this represents a military procession as at Dupplin. Rossie Priory and Fordoun are generally dated to the second half of the 8th century<sup>1</sup> or early 9th century. They are similar in style of equestrian to those at Aberlemno which may also date to this period. The Balluderon, Fordoun and Rossie Priory horsemen are similar to those found on the later Dupplin and Benvie monuments. The horses have wavy tails and the Fordoun riders carry spears as on Dupplin or Forteviot No.4.

The placement of the horsemen at Rossie Priory (Pl.23), Fordoun (Pl.24) and Balluderon (Pl.25) within the cross serves to frame and separate them from their companions. The horseman within the cross is emphasised as the most important of the riders in this manner. The part of the panel taken up by the horsemen and hounds is by far the largest, only the cross being more dominant. This emphasises the horsemen and their relation to the cross. These three cross-slabs share compositional elements in common; at least one rider placed upon the cross, attending horsemen and symbols placed adjacent to the scene in close proximity to the most important rider.

The final Fordoun rider's mount moves at a 'flying

gallop' or rearing pose as the upper horse at the far right of the Rossie Priory cross-slab. This stance is familiar from Imperial and Late Antique mosaics and silver plate representations of military and hunting triumphs. Another rearing equestrian appears in the Shandwick crossbow scene. The horseman contained within the arm of the cross-head at Fordoun and Rossie Priory may have a different status than his companions. Perhaps he is the potentate, his kingship and divine right elevated by his placement upon the cross.

At Rossie Priory the three riders' mounts all move at the typical Pictish gait while the two horses outside the cross shaft both have different poses. The uppermost horse is depicted in a rearing pose while the lower horse simply stands at a halt all four feet on the ground. This distinction serves to further emphasise the division of the two groups of horsemen.

The composition of the Edderton (Pl.26) is simpler than the Rossie Priory or Fordoun slabs. The horseman within the semi-circle is defined as the most important of the three riders in this manner. This is emphasised by sculpting the figure in rounded relief while the other two riders are simply incised. Also, the larger size of the upper horseman in relation to the others highlights his status. On Rossie Priory, Fordoun and Balluderon, the horseman framed within the cross is visually elevated above his companions serving to even further emphasise the status of this figure.

At Rossie Priory there are two hounds accompanying the horsemen. Above the first rider a heavy set wolf-like hound is placed and below this rider a similar heavy hound. These are not the typical greyhound type dogs of the Pictish hunting scene, but hounds having massive shoulders, heavy-set square head, long pointed muzzle and a prowling walk. Perhaps these dogs are the powerful mastiff type hounds which are used as hunting and guard dogs in early Irish saga (ie. the hound of Culann in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and the hound *Ailbe* in the *Scéla Muicce Meic Dátho* are



celebrated watch dogs) and legal texts. Both hounds stand with one forepaw raised, as does the lower hound on the Rossie Priory cross-slab.

The iconographical programme of the Rossie Priory, Fordoun, Balluderon and Edderton equestrian scenes are much more ambiguous than those monuments exhibiting David imagery. There are not any such identifiable motifs such as David and the lion to illuminate the viewer's understanding of the images upon this cross-slab. The placement of horsemen upon the cross itself is probably a reference to Christian victory and triumph.

The Cross is a sacred image, a reference to the sacrifice of Christ for mankind and His divine victory over death. In this context it is a potent symbol of victory and salvation. The Cross is an image of the dominion of God and Christ and the emblem of the sacrifice of the eternal Christ. The Cross was an object of veneration and adoration representing a symbol of the figure of the exalted Christ. Here the Cross as an emblem of Christ's victory is juxtaposed with the apparently secular image of the equestrian.

It is to the Cross that the equestrian figures in this group refer. The Cross is also a symbol of divine kingship representing Christ as king of heaven and earth. On this group of cross-slabs two symbols of victory and kingship are combined - earthly and heavenly. The divine right of the potentate pictured upon the cross, is sanctioned by the symbol of the Cross itself. The triumphal imagery of the equestrian is clearly complementary to the image of the triumphal Cross. This image like the equestrian has its origin in Roman Imperial art, marking and celebrating victory and political power.

As we have seen, the horse and horseman are symbols of kingly, military and political power within early Celtic tradition. We have discussed the processions of horsemen involved in battle in the *Gododdin* and equestrian scenes related to great heroes in tales such as *Togail Bruidne Da*

*Derga*. The horseman here symbolises military prowess and heroic endeavour. Horsemanship is also a prerogative of the elite as expressed in early Irish and Welsh legal texts. For example, certain 'grades' of horses and trappings are accorded different levels of society and equestrianism is part of the education of the young noble. Horseman can be portents of fate, appearing as otherworldly messengers in such tales as *Da Derga* and the *Vitae Columbae*. Perhaps in the context of the sculpture, the horsemen may be considered as messengers of God's Word when in close association with the Cross.

The arch upon which the cross stands containing the primary rider at Edderton may represent the mount of Golgotha and the triumphant Cross.<sup>2</sup> This being the venerated crucifix upon the hill of Calvary where Christ made his sacrifice for man. The theme of victory implied by the procession of equestrian figures complements the triumphal symbolism of the Cross on the mount of Calvary. It is a symbol of the exalted Christ and a divine image of victory. The Cross standing on a Mount of Paradise from which the four rivers flowed, is related to the baptismal imagery connected with the deer.

The lower terminal of the cross-head of the other crosses in this group or as at Edderton a 'mount' containing the main equestrian figure is a reference to divine kingship, triumph and the Cross. The secular figure of the horseman by being placed upon the Cross itself is thus equated with these iconographical ideas represented by the Cross. In this manner the status of the equestrian figure is reinforced through association with the Cross and identification with Christ. The horseman is given a Christian understanding and acceptance as an image suitable to be placed upon or in association to the Cross.

The Rossie Priory, Fordoun and Balluderon horsemen are shown taking part in what perhaps was a common activity of the aristocracy. At Rossie Priory they are attending their leader with two hounds, perhaps setting out or even

returning triumphant from a military exploit, a progress of possessions or the chase. This fits in with the idea of the king embodying royal and priestly powers within himself.<sup>3</sup> Here and on other examples with equestrian and hunt motifs, pictorial images are used to convey ideas about status, especially kingship. They symbolise the coming together in the person of the king of worldly and divine power; secular (social-political) and ecclesiastical power.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2. Meigle Equestrian Processions Group:

The beautifully conceived monuments of the site of Meigle, Perthshire are some of the finest examples of equestrian imagery in Pictland. The Meigle scenes are characterised by processions of horsemen. The horsemen upon these slabs usually follow a lead rider whose status is indicated by his larger size. These stones include: Meigle Nos. 1,2,3,4,5,6,11 and 26.

Meigle Nos.1 (Class II),2 (Class III) and 6 (Class II) are likely of the second half of the 8th-early 9th century<sup>1</sup> like monuments of related style and iconography as at Aberlemno. Meigle No.4 (Class II) in style of equestrian is perhaps of the late 9thC.<sup>2</sup> Recumbent monuments such as Meigle Nos.11 and 26 (both Class III) are probably no earlier than the mid-9th century due to their form and style.<sup>3</sup> Stevenson believes that contact between east and west with the accession of Kenneth Mac Alpin about 850, uniting Pictish and Scotie kingdoms may have resulted in the similarities between sculpture at Meigle and Irish cross bases such as Ahenny and Kells, in a tendency to rows of figures and equestrian motifs.<sup>4</sup>

On the reverse side of the Meigle No.4 cross-slab (Pl.27) two horsemen travel on a diagonal up the slab similar to the manner of the horsemen on Meigle No.1 (Pl.28). This feature along with the low flattened relief, rounded profiles characteristic of the Meigle stones and use of symbols in association with the riders, place these two sculptures close together. The motifs upon Meigle No.4 are not as clearly divided in registers as Meigle No.1. The placement of horsemen, symbols and beasts appearing more crowded and confused, perhaps indicating that this slab is later than No.1.

In the absence of any obvious Christian motifs or qualifiers a religious interpretation for the composition on the back of No.4 can be established if we accept the triumphal equestrian as a Christian motif of divine kingship or victory. Further Christian significance can be

inferred from the cross appearing on the front of the slab.

The horsemen decline in size with the sloping shape of the panel on Meigle No.11 (Pl.29). The first horseman is the largest of the three suggesting his higher status to his two companions. This arrangement also suggests movement. The first and last horsemen both appear to be carrying swords.

Christian significance may be derived from a belief that recumbent slabs like this were grave covers or stones. As on Classical and Late Antique sarcophagi this may represent a scene of the deceased involved in a favourite pastime or in a military aspect promoting his *virtus*.

On Meigle No.2 (Pl.30) the horsemen and hounds are placed in a spatial relationship. The hound in the foreground almost completely overlaps the background one. A further spatial relationship is created by placing riders abreast. The high relief of the figures completes this coherent suggestion of spatial depth, the device of overlapping a sophisticated method of dealing with spatial relationships in a composition which is stereotyped in many ways. Overlapping of riders is also used on Meigle No.26 (Pl.31).

The technique of this scene and the ones accompanying it, bear a resemblance to that of Hilton of Cadboll.<sup>5</sup> Both have the flattened high relief surface with rounded profiles (also seen at Aberlemno No.3 and St.Vigeans No.1) and use the device of overlapping to indicate two or more figures in relief. In size and arrangement it is reminiscent of Aberlemno No.3,<sup>6</sup> the equestrian scene on both occupying a major allotment of space upon the slab and the branch carrying centaur in the bottom third of the slab. The Aberlemno scenes are also divided into three



distinct zones; the symbols, the hunt and the centaur and David and the lion.

On Meigle Nos.1,2,4,11 and 26 hierarchic scaling of the horsemen is a predominant compositional feature. As mentioned previously this may indicate relative status of the riders. For example, the upper horseman on Meigle No.2 is the most important as he is the largest. As well as being the largest, the top centre position is occupied by this rider indicating that he is of a higher order than his companions. The position of this rider is physically higher than his companions placing him in a visual position of authority. This suggests that he is probably a king, important noble or "potentate."<sup>7</sup>

Horses are symbols of status and wealth, not simply means of transport, a rider being physically higher than a person on foot thus in a position of authority.<sup>8</sup> Horses and hounds must be specially bred, fed, equipped, trained and housed (in stables or kennels), an expensive pastime and definite statement of wealth and authority to those of a lower social order. The horsemen are equipped with spears, swords and perhaps shields marks of their military power and position in society as warriors and nobles along with the horses they ride.

The triumphal pose of these equestrian figures complements well the general Christian symbolism attached to such scenes of victory, especially in connection with the associated scenes, the angel and cross on the front of the slab. The images of horsemen and hunters often neighbour themes which have an undoubted religious sense as at Meigle No.2. This resemblance is not always decisive, for the ambivalent theme may elaborate freely on an extra-religious aspect of the religious representation<sup>9</sup> such as triumph at Meigle or upon slabs where no recognised Christian motif accompanies the horsemen or hunt.

The Meigle Nos.1 and 2 cross-slabs are unusual having the only two Meigle equestrians that appear to be directly associated with an established Christian image. The

Christian context of the equestrian procession on Meigle No.1 is emphasised by the two-winged angel that is suspended above the first rider in the second register and on Meigle No.2 where a four-winged angel accompanies the foremost horseman. Similar angels are found in association with hunt motifs on Eassie and fantastic beasts on Dunfallandy and St.Vigeans No.1. Angels are generally found on the side of the cross above or below the cross arms (ie.Dunfallandy, Eassie, St.Vigeans). Aberlemno No.3 also displays two-winged angels beside the cross.

All these monuments display the Meigle preference for the use of angels, fantastic and allegorical beasts, low-flat relief carving, and in most cases either hunt or equestrian imagery. We believe the appearance of these two or four-winged angels connect these monuments in some manner. The influence of a school of sculpture (ie. a workshop of masons) associated with a centre such as Meigle, could be possible especially in light of questions of style, technique, and other common motifs like the equestrian.

The *Daniel in the Lions' Den* theme below the equestrian procession at Meigle No.2 may indicate a Christian interpretation of the horsemen and the angel. Here the lion is a symbol of evil, persecuting Daniel. Daniel menaced by the lions of the wicked, is delivered by the angel of the Lord. *Daniel and the Lions* is a widespread theme in Early Medieval art. Curle suggests that it is one of a limited set of themes found on Irish monuments<sup>10</sup> as visual representations of episodes in the prayer, *commendatio animae* which appears in the *Martyrology of Oengus* (c.800) and exhorts God for salvation with the formula, "Save me O Lord, as thou saved Daniel from the Lions' Den."

The general religious theme may be one of victory and triumph, indicated by the use of the equestrian in a triumphal pose and the presence of the angel. Henderson interprets the angel on Meigle No.2 as a winged victory of

the type familiar from a Justinian solidus, recording some temporal victory alongside the eternal resurrection and salvation imagery of Daniel on Meigle No.2.<sup>11</sup> This accords well with the derivation of the pose of the horse from Roman triumphal sculpture and still maintains the overall symbolic theme as one of victory - a temporal victory of the horsemen complements the spiritual victory implied by the Daniel scene and the cross on the front of the slab.

The ambivalent relationship between the possible Christian and secular interpretations of such scenes is served by the complementary symbolism of each interpretation. Such a procession of horsemen carries connotations of victory in a secular sense as well. The triumphal pose of the horsemen familiar from Roman Imperial triumphal sculpture reinforces this interpretation. Even the small horse in a rearing or flying-gallop on Meigle No.1 is familiar from Roman battle reliefs or Gaulish sculpture of the horseman *à l'anguipède*.

The horses and hound serve as a display of wealth on the part of whoever the riders may be - powerful potentates or warriors and their attendants. Equestrian displays of wealth occur in early Irish tales in which horse, trappings and mounted warriors are gifts of otherworldly nature. These descriptive passages are a verbal display of wealth and power (ie. *Tochmarc Étaíne*). Whether the horsemen are warriors or unarmed riders, the importance of their relative status is emphasised by relative scale and position.

Perhaps the Meigle equestrian processions represent mounted warriors as a symbol of wealth, political and military power. Such horsemen may have also represented the protective obligations that such classes were expected to exercise over the lower levels of society. In early Irish and Welsh tradition mounted warriors appear as the protectors of their kingdoms (ie. *Fled Bricrenn* and *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*). That kingship and war are associated with horses and riders suggests such an interpretation (ie.

the red horses of war in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Da Derga*). Any symbolism of triumph and protection implied by a secular interpretation would accord well with such ideas attached to the symbolism of the cross on the front of the cross. By choosing scenes such as the equestrian or hunt with an ambivalent interpretation, the needs of an ecclesiastical and secular patron and community could be met.

The Meigle Nos.3 (Class II, Pl.32) and 5 (Class II, Pl.33) cross-slabs are the only two of the Meigle stones having single riders without hounds. The horseman appears on the back of the Meigle No.3 fragment is similar to those at Gask, St.Madoes and Meigle No.6 (Pl.34). That the lower portion of the slab is missing suggests that at one time there may have been more elements to the equestrian scene, perhaps a hound. The Meigle No.6 horseman is accompanied by a hound.

The isolation of the rider on the back of the cross-slab suggests that the secular symbolism is to be emphasised here. The rider may be a warrior or king pictured in his military capacity (armed and mounted) as a statement of power and victory. The triumphal pose of his mount may serve to emphasise this image as a statement of power. It also links the image to the cross on the front and its symbolism of Christian triumph and power.

### 3.3. Equestrian Figures in Association with the Cross:

This group of equestrian figures includes monuments where the equestrian is placed in association with the cross on the main face. A mid-late 9th century dating is likely. These monuments are:

Tarbat No.1 (Class II, Ross and Cromarty)  
 Migvie (Class II, Aberdeenshire)  
 Gask (Class II, Perthshire)  
 Dunkeld No.2 (Class III, Perthshire)

These Pictish monuments share the feature in common that one or more equestrian figures are placed in close association with the cross on the main or reverse face of the monument. This may bestow upon the horsemen a primarily Christian iconographical function similar in interpretation to Rossie Priory and related monuments.

A horseman is placed to the right of the cross at Migvie and Tarbat.<sup>1</sup> The symbol of the shears to the left of the cross and horseman at Migvie may indicate his status. Shears are associated with kingship in the Welsh tale of the hunt of the boar *Twrch Trwyth*. At Gask (Pl.35) and Dunkeld two horsemen appear beside the cross, one above the other at Gask and one behind the other at Dunkeld. A hound is framed by the hind-legs of the upper horseman at Gask. A single horseman is placed to the right of the cross shaft at Migvie (a second is found on the reverse). On the right side of Dunkeld No.2 another horseman is found.

Any secular imagery of victory or even kingship suggested by the horseman is fully complementary to its religious symbolism, especially where the horseman is part of a sequence of beasts associated with Christian allegorical symbolism (ie. the *hyena* and *manticores* at Gask) or motifs like Daniel in the Lions' Den at Dunkeld No.2.

### 3.4. Equestrian Figures Associated with the Life of Christ in Ireland:

On a group of Irish crosses the equestrian is part of a Christian iconography of the Life of Christ associated with other scriptural motifs upon the cross. These equestrian motifs are generally accepted as representing two New Testament scenes from the life of Christ.<sup>1</sup> *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* is likely the iconography represented by single equestrian figures upon the crosses of:

Arboe, Co.Tyrone  
Cross of Scriptures, Clonmacnois  
Broken Cross Kells, Co.Meath  
Cross of Muiredach, Monasterboice  
Kilfenora "Doorty" Cross, Co.Clare (Pl.36).

This motif is suggested to be the subject-matter of equestrian figures on the Roscrea Pillar; Old Kilcullen West Cross, Co.Kildare; Donaghmore, Co.Tyrone and Clones, Co.Monaghan.<sup>2</sup> The only extant Irish representation of the *Flight into Egypt* is suggested by Harbison to be found upon the Moone Cross, Co.Kildare.<sup>3</sup>

These equestrian motifs have an iconography not encountered upon Pictish cross-slabs. The format of the motif is different than single Pictish equestrian figures which generally occur without the accompanying figures that characterise these Irish examples. This supports the contention that the Irish cross creators were using different models to the Picts for their iconography although sharing an ultimate source in Rome and Carolingian representations.

These Irish examples do not offer an iconographical parallel to the Pictish equestrian. The Irish equestrian here is similar to Pictish horsemen in the sense of the form of the equestrian figure and its use as a religious motif. If these Irish examples represent scenes from the life of Christ,<sup>4</sup> then the equestrian placed in association with the cross and biblical imagery on Pictish examples may likewise have Christian iconographical importance. However, it is difficult to identify the latter with any recognised



Christian iconographical cycle.

In the Irish *Entry into Jerusalem*, Christ rides astride accompanied by one or more figures proceeding to the left. This type of composition has antecedents within Western European Christian iconographic tradition. Harbison draws our attention to 5th and 6th century objects, such as an ivory in the Cathedral Treasury in Milan, a limestone relief in Istanbul and a fresco in Santa Maria in Stelle at Val Pantena, near Verona.<sup>5</sup> The movement of the horse's legs at Arboe is echoed in a 9th/10th century ivory in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, showing a figure holding a palm behind Christ as may be seen at Arboe and one of the figures lays his garment down as at Kells.<sup>6</sup>

*Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, a motif composed of a single rider, is likely the subject of horseman at Arboe and the Kells Broken Cross. At Arboe and Kells the horseman is associated with scenes from the early and public life of Christ.<sup>7</sup> In both these scenes, the mounted Christ appears to be accompanied by other figures. Harbison draws our attention to the head of a figure above the horse's hindquarters and two above its neck and head at Arboe and Kells two figures, one above the other behind the horse and another in front of it.<sup>8</sup>

The *Entry into Jerusalem* may be portrayed in a formerly unidentified scene upon the Cross of Scriptures according to Harbison.<sup>9</sup> Although very worn, a figure may once have been placed behind the horseman. The object beneath the horse's head with two horizontal limbs extending beyond, may represent the tree with Zacchaeus in it or a figure holding a palm branch.<sup>10</sup> The Old Kilcullen rider may tentatively be associated with this motif as a figure behind the rider may hold a palm branch.<sup>11</sup> The Roscrea scene is similar to that of the Cross of Scriptures.

The Cross of Scriptures scene is slightly different to Arboe or Kells, the horse holding its head lower and the figure behind its head are more similar to the scene on a

4th century sarcophagus in the Museo delle Terme in Rome or on fol.196 of a late 9th century *Homilies of Gregory Nazianzen*, (gr.510, Bibliothèque National, Paris).<sup>12</sup> If, like Harbison, we interpret the central scene on the base accompany the Cross of Scriptures' scene as a *Resurrection* and that on the right as the *Marys at the tomb*, then these three scenes "would encompass neatly the events of Easter week from *The Entry into Jerusalem* until the *Resurrection* on Easter Sunday."<sup>13</sup>

On the Cross of Muiredach, the horseman holds out a book and in the upper left and right corners of the panel appear an angel. The right-hand angel holds what appears to be a censer.<sup>14</sup> While the rider has been suggested to be part of an *Entry into Jerusalem*, he may be apocalyptic, accompanied by the angel with the golden censer as in fols.19v and 24r of the *Trier Apocalypse* (c.800)(Pl.38).<sup>15</sup>

On the south side of the Moone Cross base, is a scene generally agreed to be the *Flight into Egypt*. Mary sits side-saddle with the Christ child held diagonally across her lap, upon a horse lead by the reins by Joseph, proceeding to the right. The equestrian scene upon the Ruthwell Cross (late 7th or early 8th century) located in the Scottish borders, is believed to be a *Return from Egypt* or *Flight into Egypt*.<sup>16</sup> As at Moone, Mary is seated upon the horse holding the Christ child while Joseph leads. However, they travel to the left. The closest Western European parallel to the Moone motif is found upon the fresco from Müstair.<sup>17</sup> The Moone scene may derive from this type of motif. The *Flight into Egypt* has been interpreted by Schiller as a revelation of Christ to the heathen (Pl.39).<sup>18</sup>

Horsewomen seated 'side-saddle' are also found upon the Pictish Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab and earlier Gallo-Roman and British representations of the goddess Epona. In early Celtic tradition, horsewomen are associated with goddesses that have equine attributes such as Epona, Macha of Irish tales, and Rhiannon of the Welsh *Mabinogion*.

The use of these New Testament images is in accordance with the interplay of Old Testament prophecies for the New and the prayer for God's Help characteristic of Irish cross iconography. The horseman in all examples is of the type characteristic of Pictland, posed in the high-stepping gait so typical of the triumphal equestrian found in Roman Imperial art. The horses of Moone and Old Kilcullen however, appear to amble, lacking the high leg action of the horses in the other examples. The *Flight into Egypt* finds a similar position upon the cross as the *Entry into Jerusalem*, in association with other scenes from the life of Christ or motifs of salvation and deliverance such as the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace at Moone.

### 3.5. Equestrian Figures and Processions without Direct Christian Association:

This grouping includes those monuments displaying equestrian processions or figures that do not have an immediate or obvious relation to other Christian symbols on the monument. The Christian symbolism of the equestrian may be inferred indirectly, primarily through their presence on a Christian monument and the ambivalent nature of these motifs. It is important to remember that equestrian figures do not appear so prevalently upon Pictish or Irish sculpture until the Early Medieval period and can stand alone as a Christian image.

The horsemen may be divided into three different groups:

- i) single riders;
- ii) two or more horsemen;
- iii) horsemen accompanied by hounds.

#### i) Single Equestrian Motifs:

Single equestrian motifs occur on many Pictish monuments and are all of the most common type, that depicted in the triumphal 'trot'. These monuments include some previously mentioned as well as:

Dunfallandy (Class II, Perthshire)  
 Logierait (Class II, Perthshire)  
 Migvie (Class II, Aberdeenshire - reverse)  
 Forteviot No.4 (Class III, Perthshire)  
 Menmuir No.2 (Class III, Angus)  
 Inchbrayock No.2 (Class III, Angus)  
 St.Vigeans Nos.17 and 22 (Class III, Angus)  
 Bullion (Class III, Angus)  
 Elgin Cathedral No. 4 (Drainie Nos.3 and 3a) (Class III, Morayshire)  
 Burghead No.8 (Class III, Morayshire)  
 Dogtown (Class III, Fife)  
 Bressay (Class III, Shetland)  
 Dunkeld No.1 (Perthshire)  
 (St.Vigeans Nos.17 and 22, and Burghead may be a late 9th century date, while Dunfallandy is dated to the mid-late 9th century.<sup>1)</sup>)

The Inchbrayock No.2, Burghead No.8, Dunfallandy (Pl.40), Logierait (Pl.41), Migvie and St.Vigeans horsemen are found on the reverse of a cross-slab which <sup>is</sup> dominated on the front by a large relief cross. St.Vigeans Nos.17 and

22 are similar to the horsemen at Meigle. The crosses at Dunfallandy, Inchbrayock No.2 and St.Vigeans No.17 are all accompanied by angels, evangelist symbols or allegorical beasts beside the cross shaft.

The emphasis of these equestrian motifs may appear to be secular due to the lack of Christian symbolic indicators in direct association with the equestrian figure and placement on the reverse of the slab away from the cross. Also, the fragmentary state of these monuments means that no other identification is possible in lieu of what scenes or motifs may once have accompanied these horsemen. Any Christian meaning can only be derived indirectly by reference to the cross and its accompanying motifs and symbols.

In a secular as well as possibly a religious sense, these horsemen, like the cross are symbols of power and victory. In all examples besides Bullion and Dunfallandy, the horsemen are armed warriors and in this sense are portraits of secular military power and wealth. Who these equestrian figures may have once represented can no longer even be guessed without recourse to fancy, but we may suggest that here are secular rulers, perhaps potentates or aristocratic figures presented in their military prowess much like the king upon Sassanian silver plates. These ideas of kingship, military power, and the triumphal nature of the figures themselves are reinforced and complemented by any Christian understanding that may be given to them by the cross on the front of the slab.

The Dunfallandy cross-slab equestrian figure may have a more obvious Christian understanding than those above. The horseman is unarmed and appears to wear a cowled tunic. He is also placed beneath a scene of two enthroned holy men or clerics facing one another across a small standing cross. It is suggested that these figures are St.Paul and St.Anthony and the horseman is a cleric.<sup>2</sup> This scene is divided from the equestrian motif by a frame upon which the chairs and cross of the clerics above rest.

The Dunfallandy horseman is accompanied by symbols of the blacksmith's trade perhaps suggesting he is a craftsman of some kind. Such skilled men were often associated with the workshops at monastic establishments and in early Irish law and saga occupied a privileged social level. For example, the smith-druid and king/hero maker figures Culann of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and Sithchell of the Lugaid tale.

The Bullion and Dunkeld No.1 equestrians deserve their own place amongst the Pictish horsemen, each unique in its own right and belonging to a 9th-10th century date. The Dunkeld No.1<sup>3</sup> rider may even be seen to blow on a hunting horn as the wide edge of the horn is not held to his lips as the Bullion rider does with his horn. Stevenson could find nothing "strictly comparable" to the Bullion horseman in Scandinavian or British contexts artistically or archaeologically, although drinking-horns are also seen on the cross of Barochan (Lanarkshire) and Monifieth (Angus)(P142).<sup>4</sup>

The horses are of a different type on the Bullion and Dunkeld sculptures. The Dunkeld horseman is of the characteristic later Pictish type, quite similar to the horseman at Dupplin. The Bullion<sup>5</sup> horse however, is unique its head held low and walking not at all like the high-stepping mounts with heads held high so characteristic of the Pictish equine. The horse plods uphill, placed on a slant as the equestrians at Meigle No.3 and Inchbrayock No.1. The rider has a round bossed shield slung about him as the riders do at Burghead No.8, Benvie and the Dupplin foot warriors.<sup>6</sup> On the Oldcourt Cross Base from Bray, Co.Wicklow in Ireland there is a horseman apparently blowing upon a horn<sup>7</sup> as that at Dunkeld No.1. Harbison has identified a horseman on the cross-shaft of Old Kilcullen with a spear and horn as having a counterpart at Dunkeld.<sup>8</sup>

Two Irish examples bear single horsemen at Donaghmore and Durrow, Co.Offaly. On the centre of the lower step of the west face of the Donaghmore base, a horseman faces to the right<sup>9</sup> while at Durrow, a horseman rides to the left in the top panel of the south side of the cross-head.<sup>10</sup> On



both examples the horseman is part of an iconographical programme of Old and New Testament images. At Durrow the rider is placed in association with Old Testament scenes such as David the king and Cain Slaying Abel as is the rider at Donaghmore. This may have ramifications upon the symbolic import of the horseman in these instances. In the centre of the damaged middle fragment of Teaglach Éainne, Inishmore, Co.Galway (about 12th century)<sup>11</sup>, a hooded horseman is placed below what appear to be the feet and robe of a standing figure, perhaps Christ.<sup>12</sup> Hooded horsemen are also encountered upon Pictish cross-slabs such as Benvie.

#### ii) Two or More Equestrian Figures:

This group includes those Pictish and Irish monuments with two or more equestrian figures. In addition to the examples discussed below, sculpture previously alluded to may be considered to be part of this general grouping.

St.Madoes is generally dated to the mid-late 9th century.<sup>13</sup> The St.Madoes horsemen (Pl.43) appear on the reverse of a cross-slab one above the other. Here the three riders are placed within their own frames. The first and second horsemen are the largest, the third awkwardly elongated and squeezed into his narrower frame. The St.Madoes equestrian scene is similar to that already described at Inchbrayock No.1.

Two horsemen are placed one below the other on the reverse of Menmuir No.1.<sup>14</sup> Both figures are armed with round bossed shields. The upper rider carries a spear and wears a tunic with fold indicated in a linear fashion. The upper rider is the largest and most elaborately attired indicating his superior status.

The symbolism of the St.Madoes and Menmuir horsemen and other examples in the scheme of the cross-slab's iconographical programme is best interpreted in a similar fashion to those equestrian figures above. The three St.Madoes horsemen do not carry weapons and are attired in hooded garments. This may suggest that they are clerics on

horseback (saints' lives such as that of Columba often describe the clergy as using riding horses for personal transportation). However, the same type of garments are worn by the hunters with crossbows at St.Vigeans No.1, Shandwick and Glenferness.

Processions of horsemen are also found upon Irish crosses of roughly contemporary date, about the 9th century. On the south side of the Monaincha base, Co.Tipperary (about 12th century)<sup>15</sup>, two horsemen appear with a large figure between them that appears to be transfixd by the spear of the right-hand rider.<sup>16</sup> The horses stand upon stepped crosses. Three horsemen ride to the left in the upper panel of the east face of the base of the Cross of Scriptures (Pl.44). Below are two chariots each containing a charioteer and passenger. This scene has been interpreted <sup>by Henry</sup> as the Bringing of the Faith to Ireland by Henry and the Magi, although there are no identifying features.<sup>17</sup>

A procession of four riders armed with swords and round shields move to the left across the south face of the base of the Market Cross (Pl.45).<sup>18</sup> Although the panel is worn, about five horsemen and possibly a lion or large dog can be made out on the east face of the Clonmacnois South base (Pl.46).<sup>19</sup> Also, on the east face of the Kilkieran West base, Co.Kilkenny, eight horsemen are portrayed.<sup>20</sup> The panel is divided into two, each section containing four horsemen. On the left, the horsemen face right and on the right all face the same way except the bottom right horseman who faces left. In the upper register of the north face of the Seir Kieran base, three or four riders appear to move to the left to face five figures brandishing staffs.<sup>21</sup>

The horsemen are of a similar type to the Pictish examples above. The horses are posed in the same high-stepping triumphal gait. The legs of the riders at Kells fall behind the horses' forelegs not between them as on most Pictish examples. However, the Irish parallel does

suggest that similar equestrian models were available and made use of by the Irish and Pictish sculptors throughout the same period. As Edwards points out, "This is not a closely knit group [Pictish] since the horsemen sport a great variety of attributes and cannot be closely compared with any of the Irish examples but their popularity in both Ireland and Pictland may reflect a common love of horses and horsemanship."<sup>22</sup>

However, we feel that Pictish equestrians do form a closely knit group especially if the degree of stereotyped form is considered and the tendency of the later examples to show degeneration of that form - a characteristic also of the Irish examples which generally seem close in type to the later Pictish equestrian form. As these processions are placed separately to the main cross (head and shaft) and any religious images they can be regarded as a motif which is used in a similar way to the Pictish equestrian which is placed on the reverse of the cross-slab without association with the religious motifs on the main face. These Irish equestrian processions can most likely be understood in the same way as their Pictish counterparts. The Irish equestrian like the Pictish is used for its complementary function of meaning - its multivalence - the ability to have a dual layer of meaning, secular and religious, one of the reason for its acceptance and use on a Christian monument.

iii) Horsemen accompanied by Hounds:

This group includes monuments exhibiting horsemen accompanied by hounds and are found on:

Woodwray (Class II, Angus)  
 Cossans (Class II, Angus)  
 Mortlach (Class II, Banffshire)  
 Kirriemuir No.3 (Class III, Angus)  
 Benvie (Class III, Angus)  
 Dull (Class III, Perthshire)

Woodwray is dated to the late 8th-early 9th century and Cossans and Benvie to the later 9th-10th century.<sup>23</sup>

The Woodwray cross-slab is similar in style to and was found close to the Aberlemno cross-slabs. It is also quite

similar to the Dunfallandy slab in style. On the reverse of the Woodwray slab are the remains of three horseman, the first two horses having docked tails.<sup>24</sup> Whether there were once any more is impossible to tell due to the weathering and breakage of the surface of the slab. A single horseman, the largest of the three is placed in the top register in his own panel accompanied by two symbols. In the panel below are the two other horsemen one following behind the other. Just above the third horseman is the forepart of a stocky dog-like beast. This may be a hound of heavier build than the familiar greyhound type of the hunt motif. That this may be a canine is indicated by the wedge-shaped head similar to hounds in other examples, and back-pointing ears. At Cossans (Pl.47) a similar framing device of groundlines is used to separate two groups of riders from one another. A stocky hound also accompanies the greyhound at Cossans but here it runs rather than walks as at Woodwray.

There are two horsemen on the reverse of the Benvie slab, one placed above the other as at St.Madoes in their own panels.<sup>25</sup> A hound lopes beside the uppermost horseman. Both are armed with a circular shield, spear, and sword. The lower horseman wears a helmet with a nasal piece much like those seen at Aberlemno No.2. Both riders have moustaches similar to those at Dupplin and the Forteviot arch.<sup>26</sup> The upper most horseman one can note straps supporting the shield as at Bullion or Burghead No.8. This slab is found not far from Dupplin which may indicate the reason for the similarity in figures.

The Kirriemuir cross-slab also follows a similar plan and Curle suggests the two slabs are by the same hand.<sup>27</sup> These equestrians are rather stiff and lifeless compared to the elegant and lively figures at Meigle or Hilton of Cadboll. However, there is a great deal of attention given to points of detail like the attire and trappings of the horsemen at Benvie. Radford suggests that this change in form from "linear and formal to more detailed naturalistic

models is clearly inspired by some external influence", this being the drawings of the Winchester manuscript school (10th century) and suggests a date for such Class III examples in the early to mid 10th century.<sup>28</sup> However, the horsemen have much akin with Irish examples such as the moustached horsemen found on fols.89r and 255v of the *Book of Kells*.<sup>29</sup>

At Dull two horsemen armed with spears each accompanied by a hound wearing a collar round its neck.<sup>30</sup> The Dull slab shows the same attention to detail as at Benvie suggesting that it is close in date as does the clumsiness of the equestrian figures and inclusion of collars upon the hounds as at Meikle Nos.2 and 26. Two horsemen are found upon the Kirriemuir No.3 slab.

There are four horsemen upon the reverse of the Cossans cross-slab. A possible fifth has been suggested by Alcock to have once filled the quadrangular space below the crescent and V-rod and double-disc symbols occupying the top third of the reverse of the slab.<sup>31</sup> The horses appear to have docked tails at the top, except for one with a wavy tail and are lovely examples of the characteristic type of equestrian as seen at Aberlemno and Meikle. Two hounds are positioned above the flank of the last horse in the lower frame. On the reverse of the Mortlach cross-slab (Class II, Banffshire) a single horseman and hound are incised (Pl.48).

None of these equestrian examples are accompanied by any qualifying Christian images to suggest any direct inference of Christian iconographical interpretation. Their prime impulse appears to be secular as the equestrian motifs described above and probably hold a similar symbolic meaning. The equestrians at Benvie, Cossans, Kirriemuir No.3 and Mortlach all appear upon cross-slabs. Here the horsemen are accompanied by hounds like the horse a symbol of wealth, war, and the chase - all prerogatives of the aristocracy. As mentioned earlier the hound often accompanied the mounted warrior to war in Irish saga and in

the *Gododdin* as well as being a valued and fierce protector of society (ie. *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, *Scéla Muicce Meic Dathó*) like the human warrior.



#### Chapter 4 - Summary Statement:

In Part Three we have established that the chase and equestrian motifs of Early Medieval Pictish cross-slab and Irish cross art are representative of an amalgam of artistic and literary influences of classical and native styles that characterize Celtic art of that period as discussed in Parts One and Two. As we have suggested, this is the same complex inter-relationship of influences and models that is present in the sagas, hagiography, and laws recorded by monastic centres at the end of the early medieval period in Celtic Britain (ie. Ireland and Wales).

Whereas Part One had established that the chase and equestrian motifs of Pictish and Irish sculpture function as arcane Christian symbols rooted symbolically and formally in the heritage of Roman classicism and antiquity. Part Two, has shown the iconographic import of the chase and equestrian within early Irish, Welsh and North British literary tradition deepening our understanding of these motifs' symbolic intent more completely and giving a more intimate glimpse of what these images meant to the people who chose to carve them upon monumental Christian sculpture. Part Three has shown that, the themes of salvation, deliverance, regeneration, triumph and sovereignty come to the fore as the underlying messages of these images in their Christian and non-Christian manifestations.

The chase and equestrian share in some common iconographical themes, ambivalent in nature and readily manipulated to suit the demands of ecclesiastical and secular patrons. This iconography juxtaposes Old Testament prefiguration and their New Testament fulfilment and psalmic readings with native traditions of the hunt and equestrian expressing themes and symbolism present in native literary tradition. Many of the examples of the chase and the equestrian motifs are associated with or function as part of a symbolic cycle of images associated with a particular Christian theme. For example, those

monuments connected with the St. Andrews sarcophagus and Clonmacnois are associated with the Old Testament hero and king, David and thus, Christ's life in the New Testament.

We can surmise that the symbolism of kingship, worldly and divine, is an aspect of the chase and the equestrian in general upon the monuments discussed above. These motifs are a method of conveying ideals of status and power through representing the pursuits of those who held political power. In turn, these worldly leaders are associated with divine ideals of kingship by the Christian symbolism of these images. The Christian symbolism is complementary, the baptismal imagery of the stag and the triumphal symbolism of the equestrian both associated with Christ, ruler in Heaven. In this manner and allied with the ecclesiastical community as patrons of monumental sculpture, these rulers appear as pious men.

#### PART FOUR - Conclusions:

The enigmatic motifs of the chase and the equestrian upon Pictish cross-slabs and Irish high crosses have been the focus of our discussion. The chase and the equestrian motifs can be meaningfully regarded as having a simultaneously Christian and secular, literal and symbolic, and local and universal iconographical significance. These iconographies of these motifs are multi-layered and complex, distinguished by an ambivalent interplay of sacred and secular symbolism at once thematically complementary and multivalent in meaning. The chase and the equestrian motifs express religious and extra-religious symbolism simultaneously such as the social and cultural prerogatives of the ecclesiastical and secular segments of society.

We have argued that there appears to be no real contradiction between the secular and religious meanings of the chase and the equestrian motifs. As there were presumably real differences in ideology and interest between the church and secular rulers, perhaps there was an attempt to minimize this tension via the erection of monuments using motifs that expressed the interests of both parties. This contradiction is expressed in early Irish and Welsh hagiography in which the hunter and hounds are persecutors of the Church. It was probably in the interests of the secular aristocracy in both Pictland and Ireland to make a public statement of cooperation during a period when the ruling dynasties of both regions strengthened politically as the monasteries also held cultural and socio-political power and were centres of potential wealth.

The sculpture was an expression of the elite section of society - the secular and the ecclesiastical elite were linked by ties of kinship as well as political considerations. For example, Irish monasteries were involved in the creation of a national literary past in which secular dynastic interests are evident. This process is also likely associated with the creation of sculpture which are public statements of ecclesiastical and secular

power and who held it. The chase and the equestrian motif are material symbols and divine symbols of prestige.

The discussion of the hunt and the equestrian motifs has been marked throughout by the symbolic relationship of these images to the secular and ecclesiastical spheres. It has become apparent from a discussion of patronage and the role of these motifs in hagiography that Pictish and Irish sculpture was created in an atmosphere of simultaneous cooperation and competition between strengthening kingships and the Christian church.

In Part One we discussed the historical and art-historical frame of reference in relation to the Pictish and Irish chase and equestrian motifs and their respective symbolisms. These motifs have been shown to have a complex heritage within an Early Medieval Western European tradition with roots ultimately in the classical tradition of Rome. The chase and the equestrian motifs were chosen by Pictish and Irish sculptors for their symbolic importance. The Early Medieval Christian imagery of these motifs is ultimately based upon secular Roman art such as the hunting and riding vignettes of mosaic art. The classical symbolism of victory, sovereignty, status and power was carried through into Christian the Christian manifestations of these motifs.

Pictish and Irish sculpture and the motifs chosen to adorn them were probably inspired by a common source having a common impulse or starting point. Artistic models for the chase and the equestrian were likely introduced into Pictland and Ireland through the monastic communities international network of contact. However, it is apparent that the chase and the equestrian also have an element of Celtic continuity in both art and literature. For example, the sharing of themes within Celtic literary tradition and art.

The art-historical evidence may also be used to warrant the sometime existence and nature of lost Pictish literary tradition and bridge the gap left by this loss.

The chase and the equestrian motifs as they appear in Pictish and Irish sculpture are similar to their appearance in Irish and Welsh literary traditions. This suggests a similar importance and symbolism of hunting and riding within Pictish society. The chase and the equestrian motifs figure in saga and hagiography leading to the speculation that their basic meanings have ramifications within the secular and ecclesiastical spheres and in the sculpture.

Our aim throughout has been to heighten our understanding of the chase and the equestrian motifs upon the sculpture and within Early Medieval Celtic literary tradition. The visual and literary evidence has throughout our discussion been mutually illuminating. As discussed in Part Two, the chase and the equestrian motifs have a literary significance within the Early Medieval Celtic context. The highly visual qualities of the literature corresponds with the themes and compositional elements of our motifs in Pictish and Irish sculpture. We may conclude that art and literature can illuminate each other when they express similar ideas, themes and motifs.

The ambivalence of the chase of the equestrian motifs symbolism upon Pictish and Irish sculpture can be understood with reference to native literary tradition. The themes of victory and sovereignty have come to the forefront of secular and Christian understandings of our motifs. There is also a link between the sculptural manifestations of the motifs with their appearance in literary sources. For example, the simple hunt found upon Irish and Pictish monuments is echoed in the bare descriptions of the chase in early Irish tales such as *Lugaid* and *Níall*. The more elaborate hunt scenes (i.e. *Hilton of Cadboll*, *Kells crosses*) are of a type reminiscent of the great hunts described in Fenian tradition.

The ideology of a 'divine right' of Christian kingship popular in Medieval Europe, such as the Carolingian Empire, is reflected in the Irish sovereignty tales of *Lugaid* and *Níall*. That is, the idea of a predestined ruler with links

to the supernatural. The Old Testament king David, ruler of a worldly kingdom, is a recurring image within Irish and Pictish art which is linked to hunting and riding scenes. King David's reign foreshadows that of the divine New Testament Christ, king in Heaven. In their worldly and divine manifestations these rulers whether biblical or of saga tradition have an important role as protectors of their kingdoms.

According to our visual and verbal sources it is apparent that hunting and horsemanship were important aspects of the life of the warrior-aristocracy. The chase and the equestrian motifs appear as socio-political symbols manifesting ideas of status and sovereignty. In Part One we have established that the chase motif is linked to the theme of Christian salvation and deliverance. This symbolism is emphasised by the inclusion of the hart and hound motif within the Pictish and the Irish hunt scenes. The meaning of the chase in Pictish and Irish sculpture is further illuminated by its importance as a literary motif. Here is likewise associated with ideals of heroism and sovereignty. The hunt initiates the young hunter into the acceptance of adulthood and kingship.

Within Christian tradition, the hunt motif is associated with the supernatural. The stag hunt symbolises the salvation through baptism and the otherworldly qualities of Christ. The chase of the deer in Irish and Welsh tradition also has associations with the supernatural and with deities who seek or offer salvation in some form.

The chase represents a trial in both a secular and Christian sense. The hero of early Irish and Welsh tradition often faces the chase as a trial - a test to prove his heroism or right to kingship. The outcome of the hunt usually results in a transformation of the hero's status and gaining of knowledge. The chase is also a trial in a Christian sense. For example, psalter images of the stag hunt (ie. *Utrecht Psalter*) associate the motif with the trials and persecution of the psalmist or Christ.



As it appears upon Pictish and Irish sculpture the chase motif shows the ritualization of the hunt within those societies. The stereotyped composition of the chase and its popularity as a sculptural motif suggests that the hunt was an important part of the ceremonial of the Pictish and Irish courts. We also find this within Early Medieval Celtic literary tradition. The simple hunts of Irish saga tradition progress to the more elaborate chases of Fenian tradition in which there are suggestions of hunting-preserves and 'officers' of the hunt within a retinue of notables. The *Laws of Hywel Dda* show the beginnings of the high ritualization of the chase with court huntsmen and falconers with duties to the king found in the High Middle Ages. The hunt in sculpture and literature usually appears in a ceremonial manner such as the game drives of Fenian lore, deer hunts of the sovereignty tales and Pictish cross-slab hunts such as Aberlemno No.3.

The chase takes place in the wilderness in early Irish and Welsh saga, hagiography and legal texts. This suggests a link to biblical symbolism of the wilderness/desert. Trials in the wilderness are associated with saints having an important place within Pictish and Irish sculptural iconography. For example, the saints Paul and Anthony. Monastic asceticism was an important part of Irish monasticism. In saints' lives, the saint is often alone in the wilderness as a hermit - the forest or mountain is the Celtic saint's desert. The heroes of Irish tradition hunt in the wild places where they also face their trials. This is a symbolism of power; man conquering nature by hunting and in this way <sup>triumphing</sup> against hostile natural forces.

The equestrian motif shares in the symbolism of victory and sovereignty. As suggested by early Medieval Irish tradition and laws the horse is a symbol of wealth and abundance. That the horse was a symbol of status is shown by the suggestions that valuable horses were imported to Ireland in legal sources, the sumptuous trappings

described in legend and legal texts and as the possession of great heroes and kings. Horses are a predominant feature of Pictish and Irish sculptured hunt motifs and in processions of notables often pictured on these monuments. The horsemen on these monuments may represent those of elevated societal status for whom the ownership of horses was a privilege. For example, Irish and Welsh laws prescribe what type of horse and trappings may be owned by the various ranks of society.

The equestrian motif also has similar meanings within visual and verbal sources. Like the chase, the equestrian is associated with aspects of heroism and sovereignty, both worldly and divine. The equestrian motif is connected with the theme of warfare also upon the sculpture and within literary sources. The horse and its trappings, such as the bridle, are emblems of wealth and status within saga and legal texts. The horse and equestrian skill are also associated with aspects of kingship, such as the royal *óenach*. The meanings accorded to the figure of the horsemen are rooted in classical tradition such as the triumphal sculpture and mosaics of the Roman Empire. These meanings are accepted into the Christian manifestations of the motif, expressing ideas of divine triumph and kingship.

There is a relationship between the visual and the verbal manifestations of the chase and the equestrian motifs. It has become apparent through discussion of artistic and literary parallels that these motifs share the same themes and meanings. The hunt and the equestrian motifs add an "extra dimension," a supplement, that glosses the authority of the central symbolic theme of the cross-slab or cross and the texts behind them.

In both visual and verbal sources we have seen that the hunt and the equestrian images are formulaic in form. This prompts the speculation that these motifs may have carried the same symbolic meanings throughout the Pictish and the Irish cultures. The meanings of these motifs may have been supplemented through the greater amount of extant

pictorial imagery available in Christian Britain than now survives<sup>1</sup> as well as by native literary tradition. Through discussion of the historical, art-historical and literary evidence it is apparent that these motifs have a symbolic importance - they are not naturalistic but formulaic stereotyped images. As we have seen in Part Three: Chapter One, the horsemen and deer hunts upon Pictish and Irish sculpture have the same distinguishing characteristics and area repeated again and again.

As we have shown the chase and the equestrian motifs have a multivalent symbolism. There is an apparent paradox between their respective Christian meaning and secular meaning. However, this paradox is superficial. The Christian and secular meanings are not polarised, but overlap, that is they are complementary to one another. The chase and equestrian motif are not simply Christian or secular in meaning, having a multivalent symbolism expressing themes meaningful to both communities.

Within these motifs the superficially inconsistent realms of worldly and divine, life and myth, and art and literature are confounded. Chase and equestrian symbolism in their visual and verbal manifestations are microcosms in precarious balance between native tradition and external forces represented by the classical heritage of Early Christian artistic symbolism. On sculpture these aspects of the imaginary and the actual, worldly and divine meet upon the background of a neutral plane of stone.

Pictish and Irish sculpture have been shown to share in a complex network of artistic inter-influences, sharing motifs and themes in common. This art is a manifestation of the predominant intellectual and artistic force of the Early Middle Ages in Europe, the Church, which left its mark upon the art and literature of European cultures, giving each a common cultural tradition, in which Britain shared.<sup>2</sup>

The most dramatic impact of the Pictish and Irish chase and equestrian symbolism is less in their respective forms, than in the myriad of ways of perceiving it. The many possible interpretations of the chase and the equestrian motifs emphasise and add to the iconographical significance of these monuments.

## APPENDIX - A Note on the Chronology of Early Medieval Sculpture in Northern Britain and Ireland:

Peter Harbison's dating of the Irish high crosses is controversial. This thesis is not concerned with establishing a chronology for the material discussed. However, it must be stressed that the chronological relationship between Early Medieval sculpture in Pictland, Ireland, Iona, and Northumbria is problematic. In the following discussion we will outline the current state of the arguments over the chronologies of North British and Irish sculpture for our period.

J.R.Allen and J.Anderson, The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland (ECMS) of 1903 set out a classification for Early Medieval sculpture in Scotland, most of which would now be classified as Pictish. The ECMS classification divides this sculpture into three 'classes'. Class I consists of undressed stones with one or more incised 'symbols'. Class II consists of cross-slabs carved in relief and bearing 'symbols'. Class III includes a broad range of monuments carved in relief but lacking 'symbols'.

C.L.Curle's "The Chronology of the Early Christian Monuments of Scotland" (1939-40) develops the chronological arguments. Still influential are R.B.K.Stevenson's dating and division of Pictish, Scottish, and Irish monuments according to 'schools' of sculpture based on stylistic and geographic considerations in The Problem of the Picts (1955) and "The Chronology and Relationship of Some Irish and Scottish Crosses" (1956). Stevenson attempts to establish stylistic and chronological relationships between the crosses of Iona, Pictish cross-slabs, and Irish high crosses.

Isabel Henderson's discussions of a dating scheme for Pictish sculpture were first set out in The Picts (1967). Henderson continued her exploration of the problematic nature of dating the Pictish material in "Sculpture North of the Forth After the Takeover by the Scots" (1978). Henderson sees Class II as beginning in the early 8th century, perhaps as a result of the importation of Northumbrian masons by King Nechtan. Class II would probably have come to an end with the ending of Pictish independence in the mid 9th century.

The most generally accepted chronology for Irish high

crosses was developed by Françoise Henry in La sculpture irlandaise pendant les douze premiers siècles de l'ère chrétienne (1933), Irish Art in the Early Christian Period to 800AD (1965), and Irish Art during the Viking Invasions (800-1020AD) (1967). Henry uses certain inscriptions and historical events to anchor her chronology. She sees crosses in the 8th century as being mainly ornamented with Insular decorative motifs. During the 9th century there is a gradual progression to crosses dominated by figurative imagery, culminating in about the early 10th century, in the 'Scripture' crosses. Henry was also the first to suggest that Carolingian art (especially ivories) was an important source for Irish cross iconography.

Harbison's chronological theories challenge Henry's dating of Irish high crosses. He bases his chronology upon the influence of the Carolingian renaissance and a new impulse of classically inspired biblical narrative scenes from this source into Britain during the second quarter of the 9th century. Relying on analogies in Carolingian fresco cycles and manuscripts, Harbison places Irish high crosses in the 830's and 840's, rather than the generally accepted 9th-10th century dating of the crosses. Harbison supports his argument by suggesting readings of the inscriptions on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois and on Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice that would date them to the 9th century rather than to the 10th century. This interpretation restricts the date range of the Irish high crosses to a relatively short period of time.

Nancy Edwards in her review of Harbison's The High Crosses of Ireland: An Iconographical and Photographic Survey (1992) agrees that Carolingian iconography played an important role in the development of the figural iconography of the Irish crosses. She points out that Harbison's discussion does not consider the relevance of Insular ornament to the dating of the crosses and that new interpretations of the inscriptions on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois have not been accepted. Edwards argues that the use of Carolingian iconography on Irish crosses need only suggest a *terminus post quem*.

Roger Stalley's view that the change in iconography of the high crosses occurring on the 9th century Irish crosses drew on an existing repertoire of Christian imagery in Ireland, rather



than being a distant reflection of imported Carolingian images.

When considering a chronology for the Pictish and the Irish monuments we should consider their relation to the sculpture of Northumbria and Iona. Rosemary Cramp's studies of Northumbrian sculpture argue that relief carving in stone was reintroduced into Northumbria from the Continent for architectural sculpture in the later 7th century. It was then applied to other types of monuments, in particular free-standing stone crosses. The recent detailed study of the sculpture of Iona by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland argues that the free-standing stone cross was developed there during the 8th century. The free-standing stone cross in Northumbria, Ireland, and the West of Scotland, and the Pictish Class II cross-slab were parallel and approximately contemporary developments of the 8th century.

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**Endnotes:***Abbreviations:*

AL	Ancient Laws of Ireland
ALIW	Ancient Laws and Institut of Waled
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
CIH	Corpus Iuris Hibernici
DIL	Dictionnary of the Irish Language
ECMS	Early Christian Monuments of Scotland
JRSAI	Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland
PRIA	Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy
PSAS	Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
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**The Iconography of the Chase and the Equestrian Motifs  
of Eighth to Tenth Century Pictish and Irish  
Sculpture with reference to Early Medieval  
Celtic Literature**

**PLATES**

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Pl.47 Cossans, Angus.  
Pl.48 Mortlach, Banffshire.

Pl.1  
St.Andrews 'Sarcophagus', Fife  
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P1.2

Aberlemno No.3, Angus

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Pl.3  
Nigg, Ross and Cromarty  
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Pl.5  
Eassie, Angus  
(Copyright: Scottish Development Department)



Pl.6  
Kirriemuir No.2, Angus  
(Copyright: RCAHMS)



Pl.7

Dupplin Cross, Perth

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of Scotland)





Pl.8  
Bealin Cross Shaft, Co. Weastmeath  
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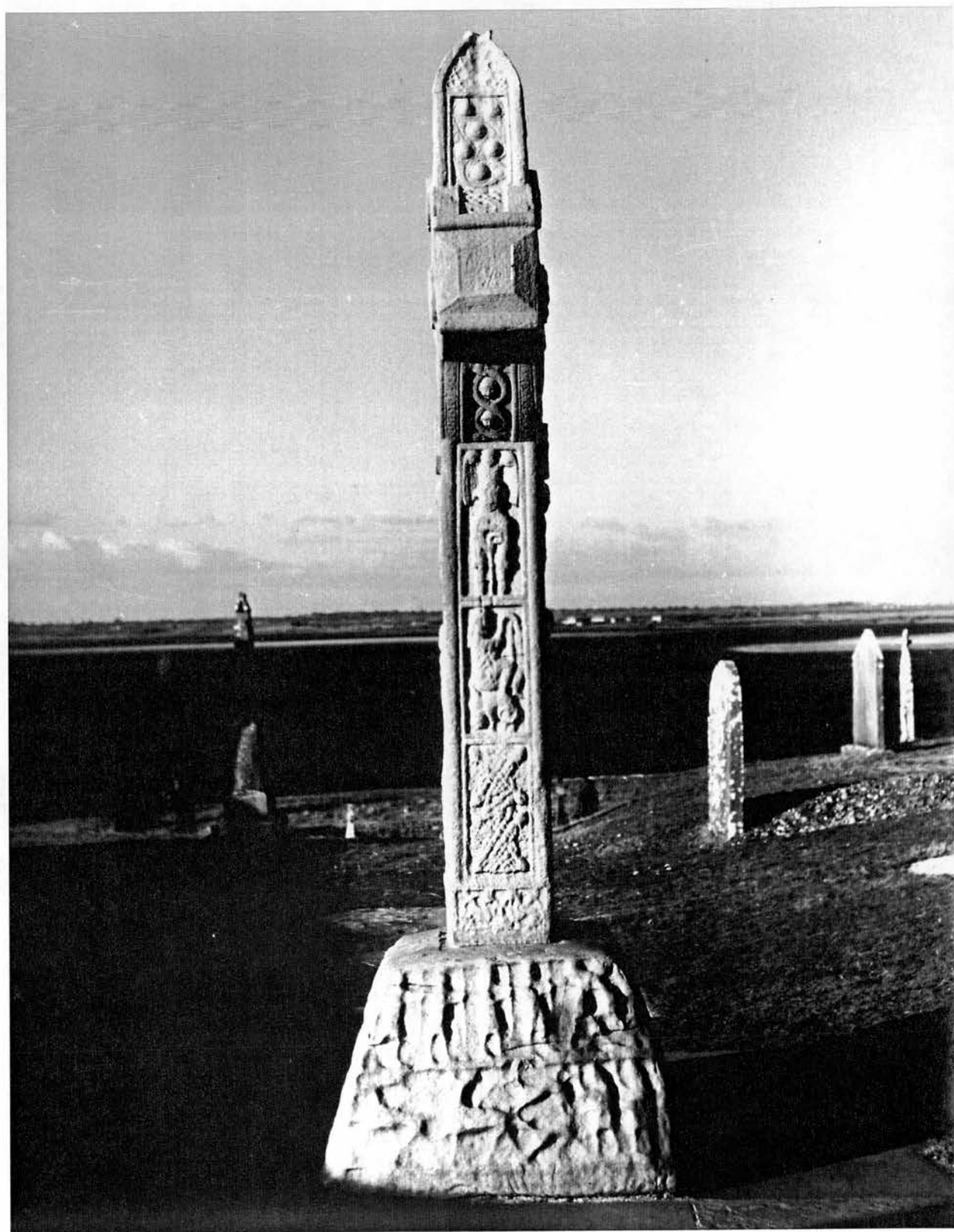
Pl.9  
Market Cross, Kells, Co.Meath - north face  
(Photo: P.Harbison)



Pl.10a  
Cross of <sup>the</sup> Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co.Offaly  
south face  
(Photo: P.Harbison)



Pl.10b  
Cross of Scriptures - north face  
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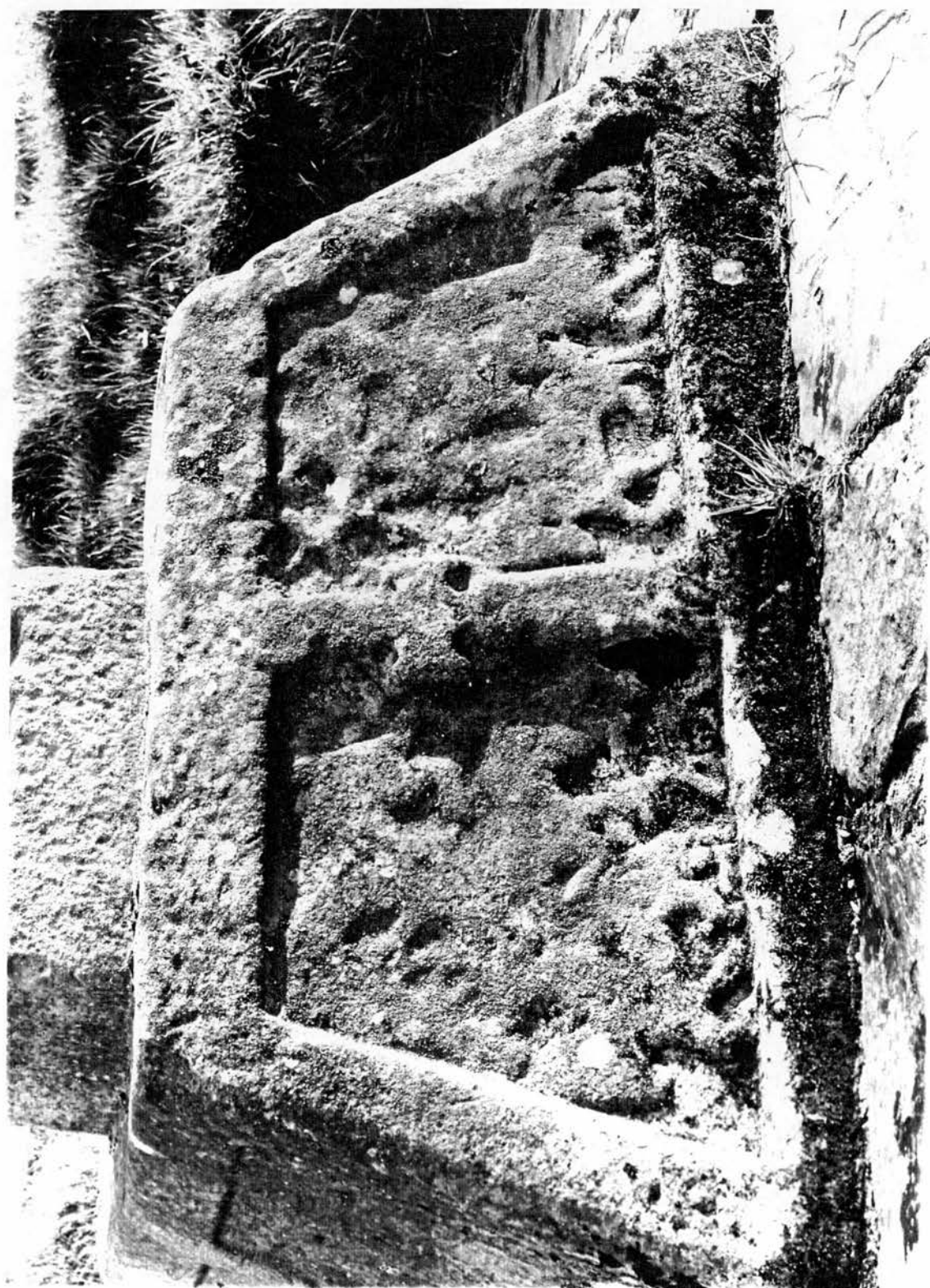
Pl.11  
Cross of SS Patrick and Columba, Kells, Co.Meath  
east face  
(Photo: P.Harbison)



Pl.12  
Castledermot, Co.Kildare - west face  
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Pl.13  
Ahenny South, Co.Tipperary - south face  
(Photo: P.Harbison)





Pl.14  
Dromiskin, Co.Louth - south face  
(Photo: P.Harbison)



Pl.15  
Killamery, Co.Kilkenny - west face  
(Photo: P.Harbison)



Pl.16  
Elgin Cathedral, Morayshire  
(Photo: T.E.Gray courtesy of RCAHMS)



Pl.17  
Scoonie, Fife  
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Pl.18  
Monifieth, Angus  
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Pl.19  
Inchbrayock No.1, Angus  
(Photo: T.E.Gray courtesy of RCAHMS)

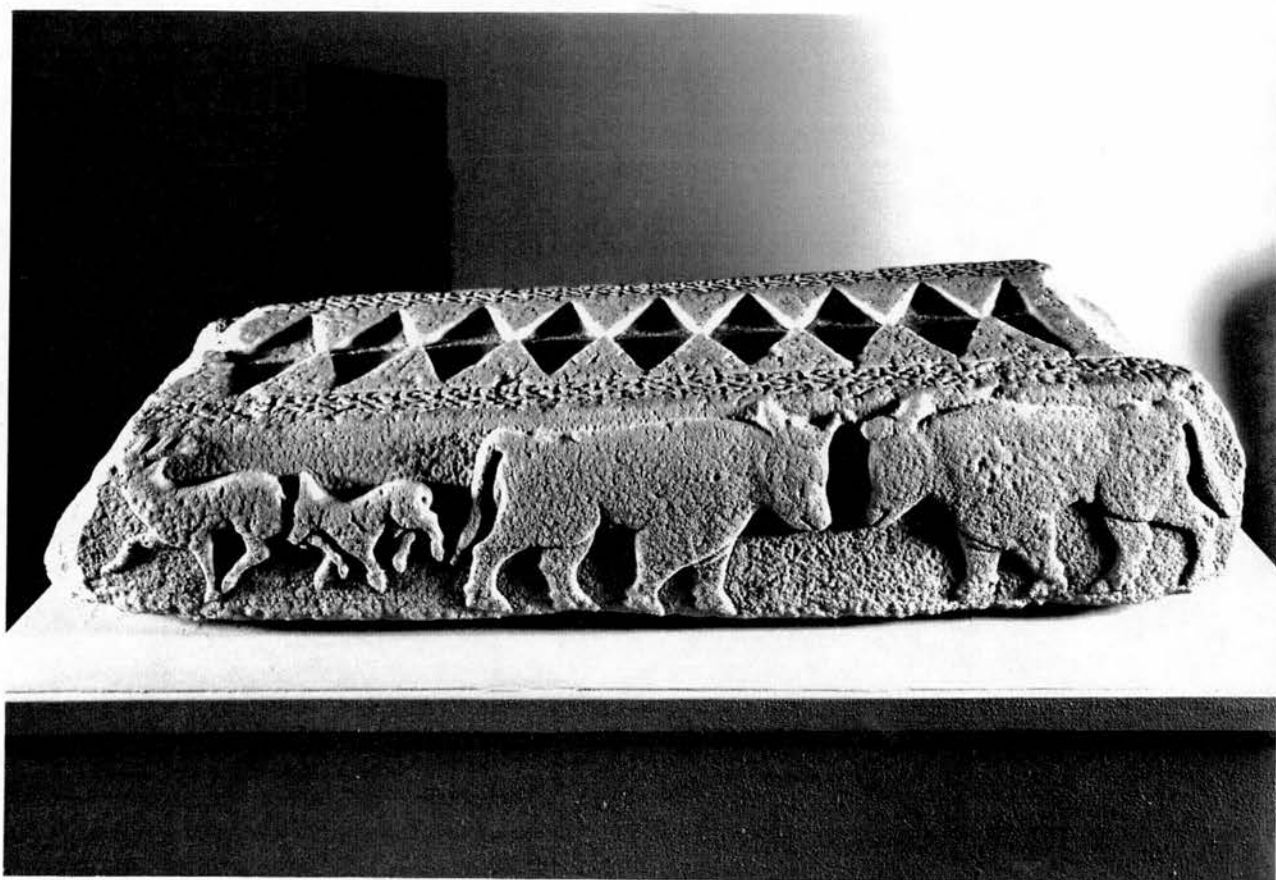




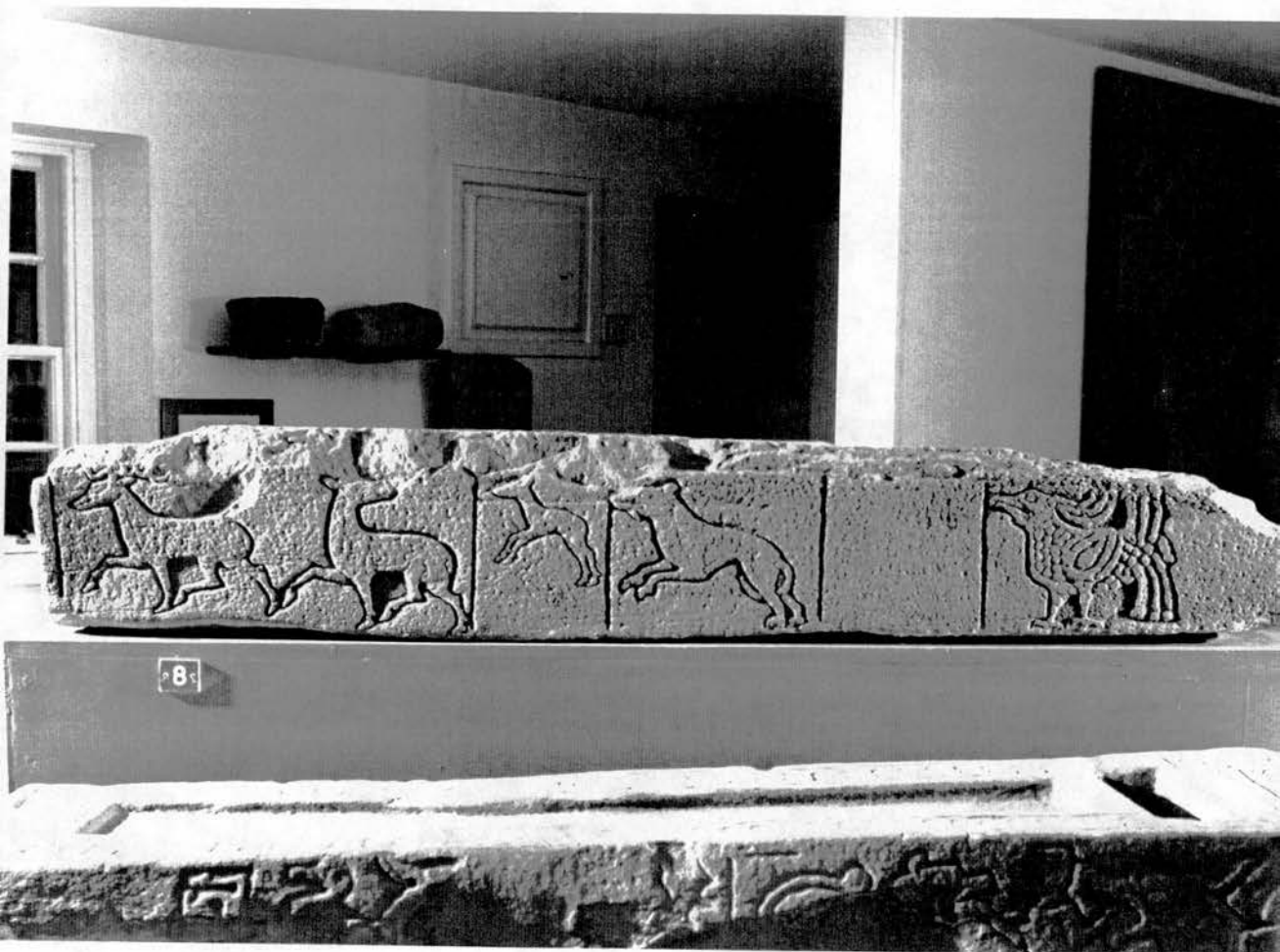
Pl.20  
St.Vigeans No.1, Angus  
(Photo: T.E.Gray courtesy of RCAHMS)



Pl.21  
Meigle No.12, Perth  
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Pl.22  
St.Vigeans No.8, Angus  
(Photo: T.E.Gray courtesy of RCAHMS)



Pl.23  
Rossie Priory, Perth  
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Pl.24  
Fordoun, Kincardineshire  
(Photo: T.E.Gray courtesy of RCAHMS)





Pl.25  
Balluderon, Angus  
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Pl.26  
Edderton, Ross and Cromarty  
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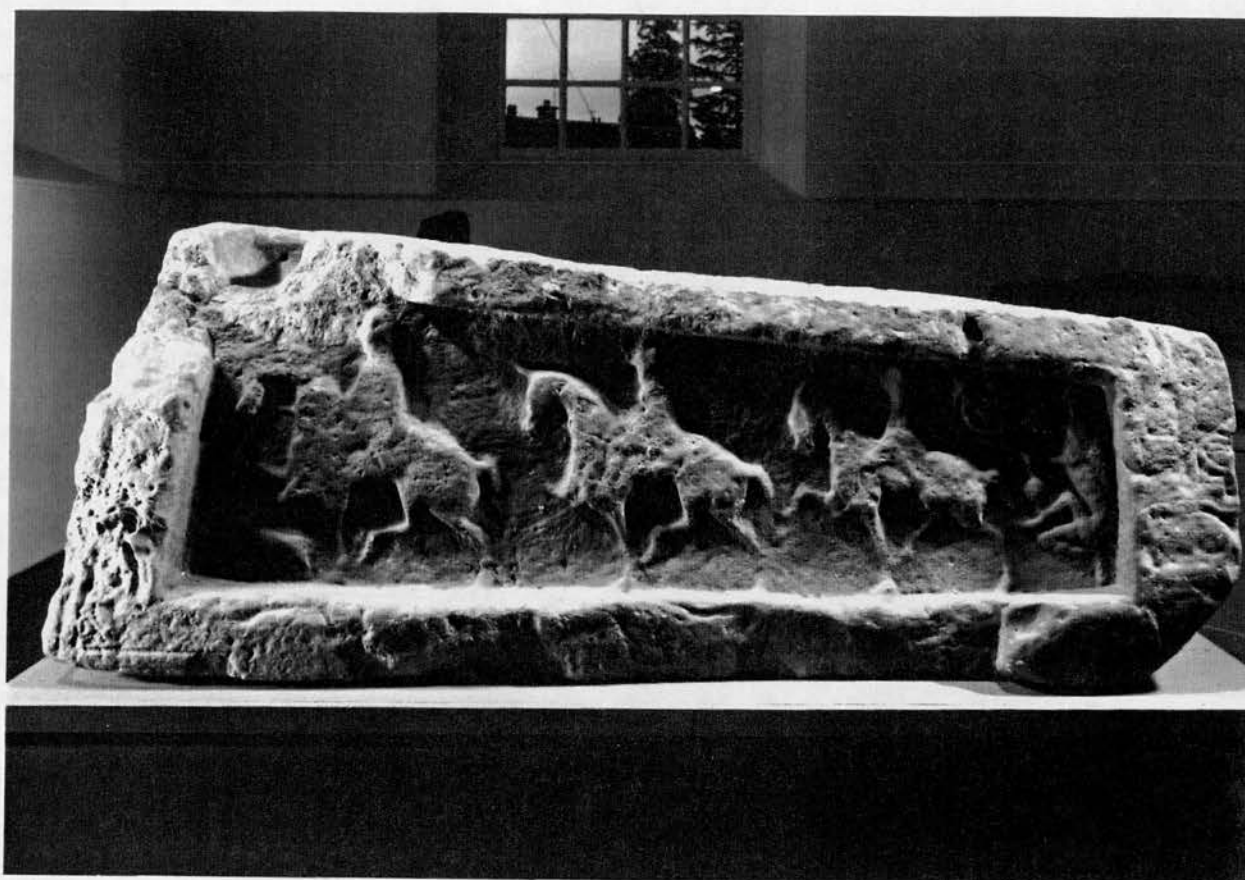
Pl.27  
Meigle No.4, Perth  
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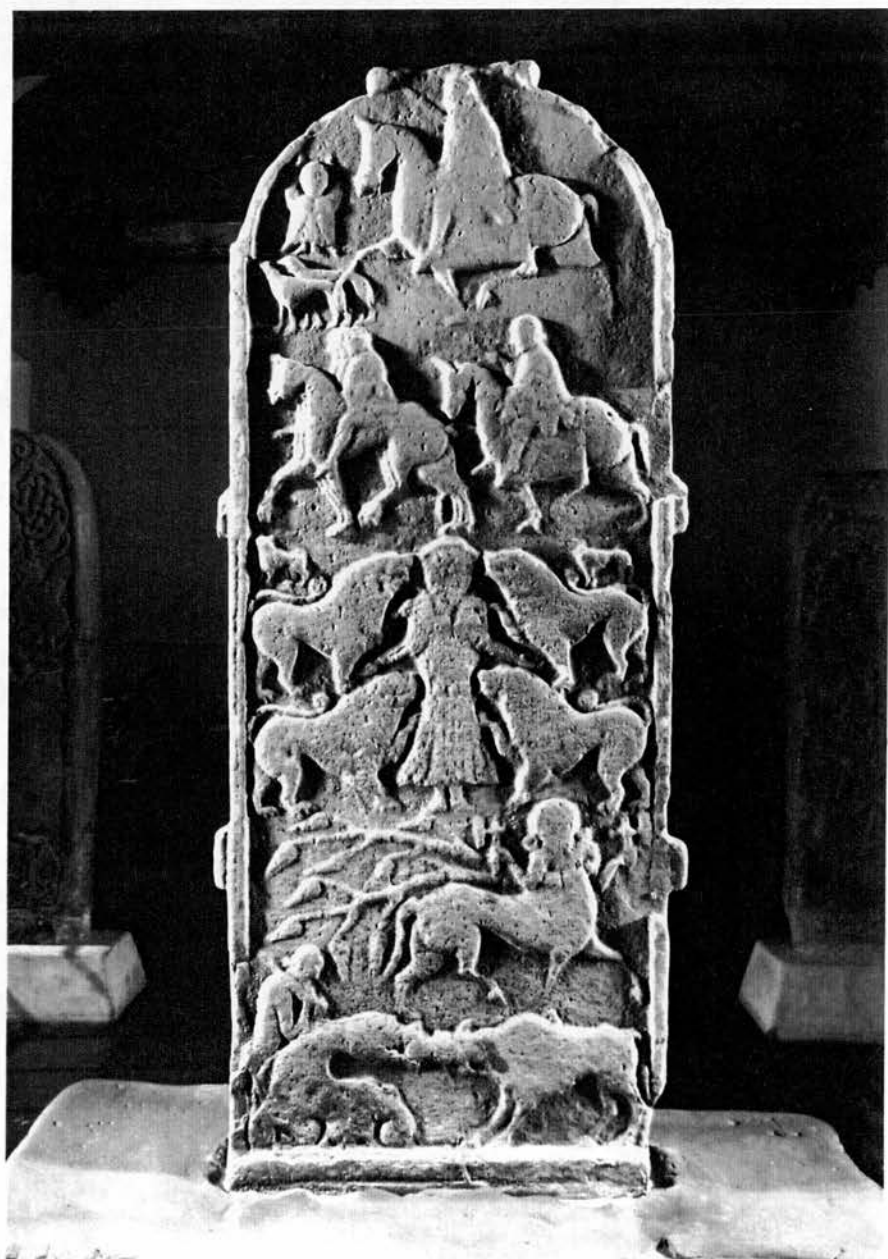
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Meigle No.1  
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Pl.29  
Meigle No.11  
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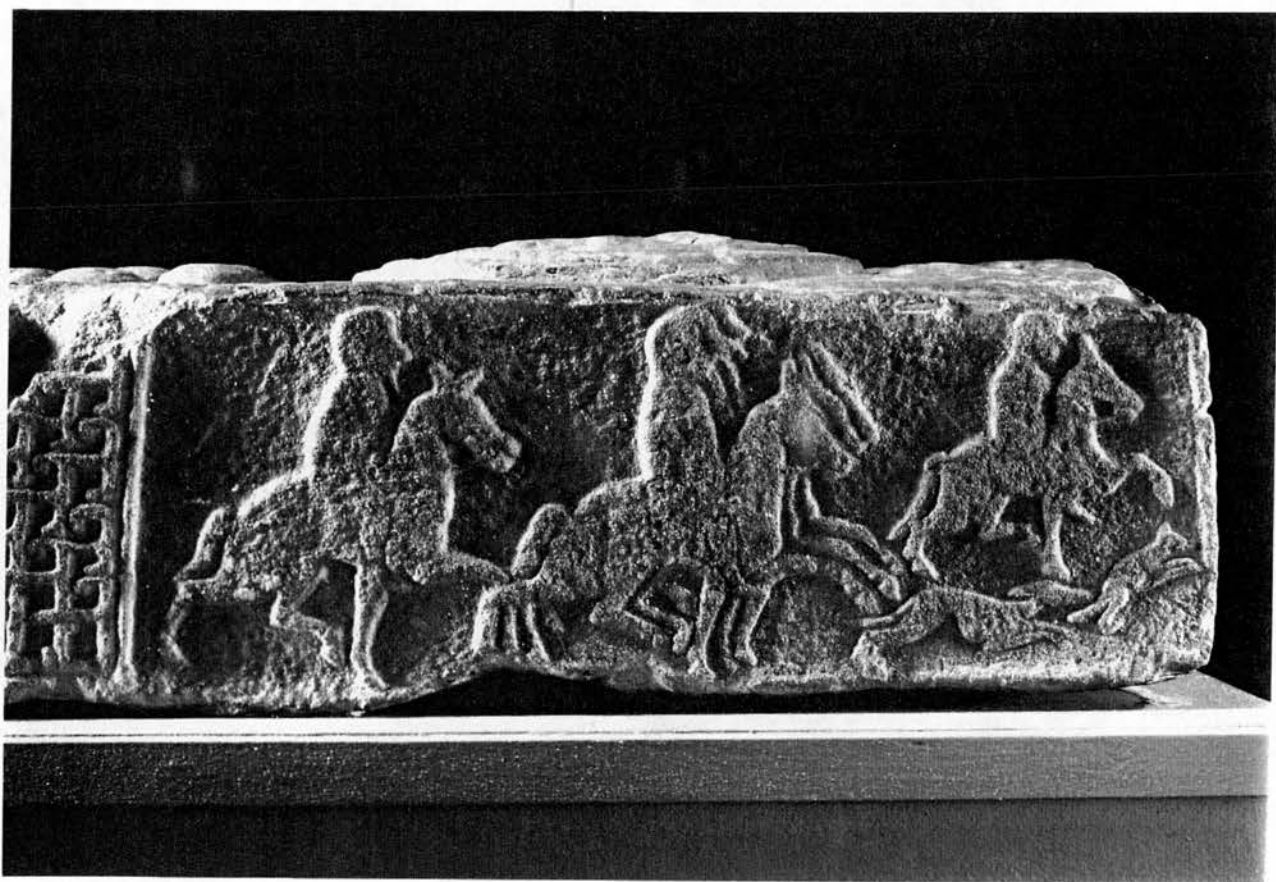


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Meigle No.2  
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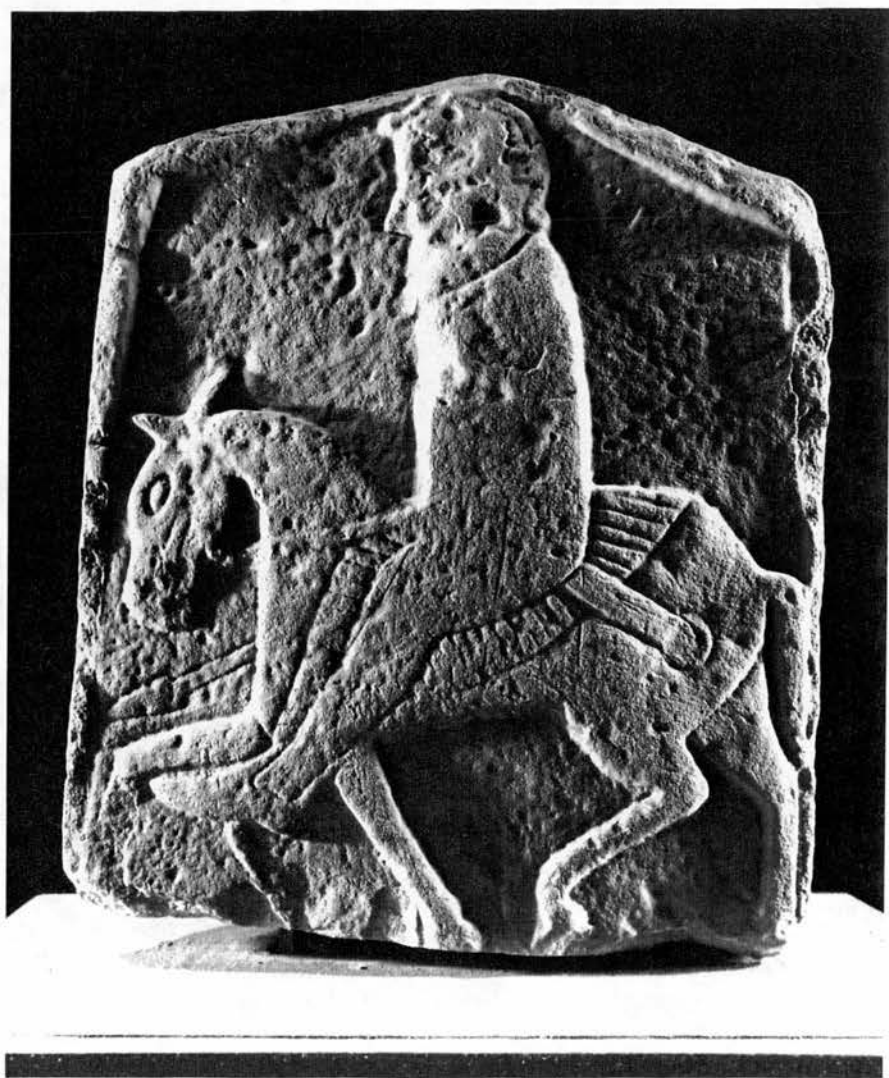


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Meigle No.26  
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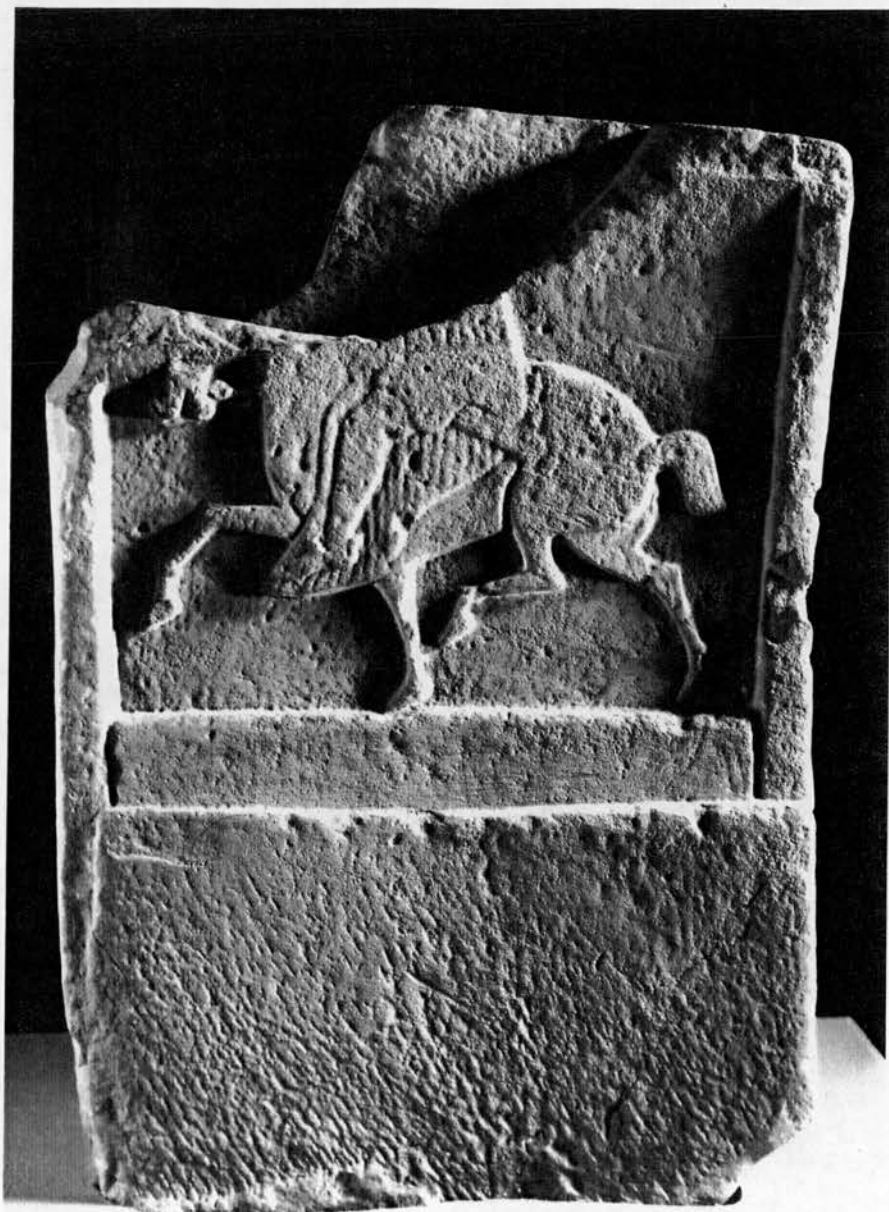




Pl.32  
Meigle No.3  
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Pl.33  
Meigle No.5  
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Pl.34  
Meigle No.6  
(Copyright: RCAHMS)



Pl.35  
Gask, Perth  
(Photo: T.E.Gray courtesy of RCAHMS)





Pl.36

Kilfenora 'Doorty' Cross, Co.Clare - west face  
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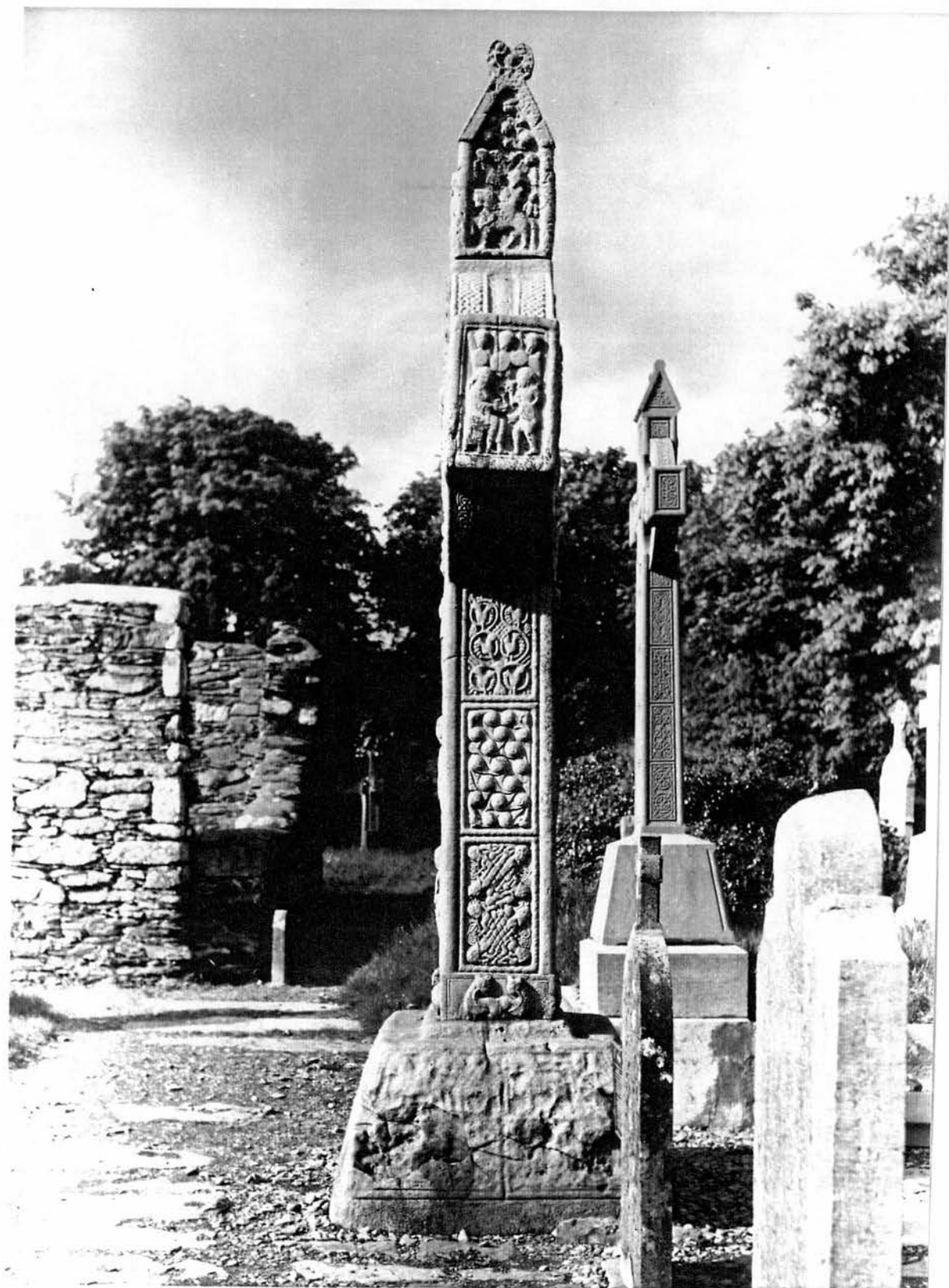


Pl.37  
Old Kilcullen Cross Shaft, Co.Kildare  
north and west faces  
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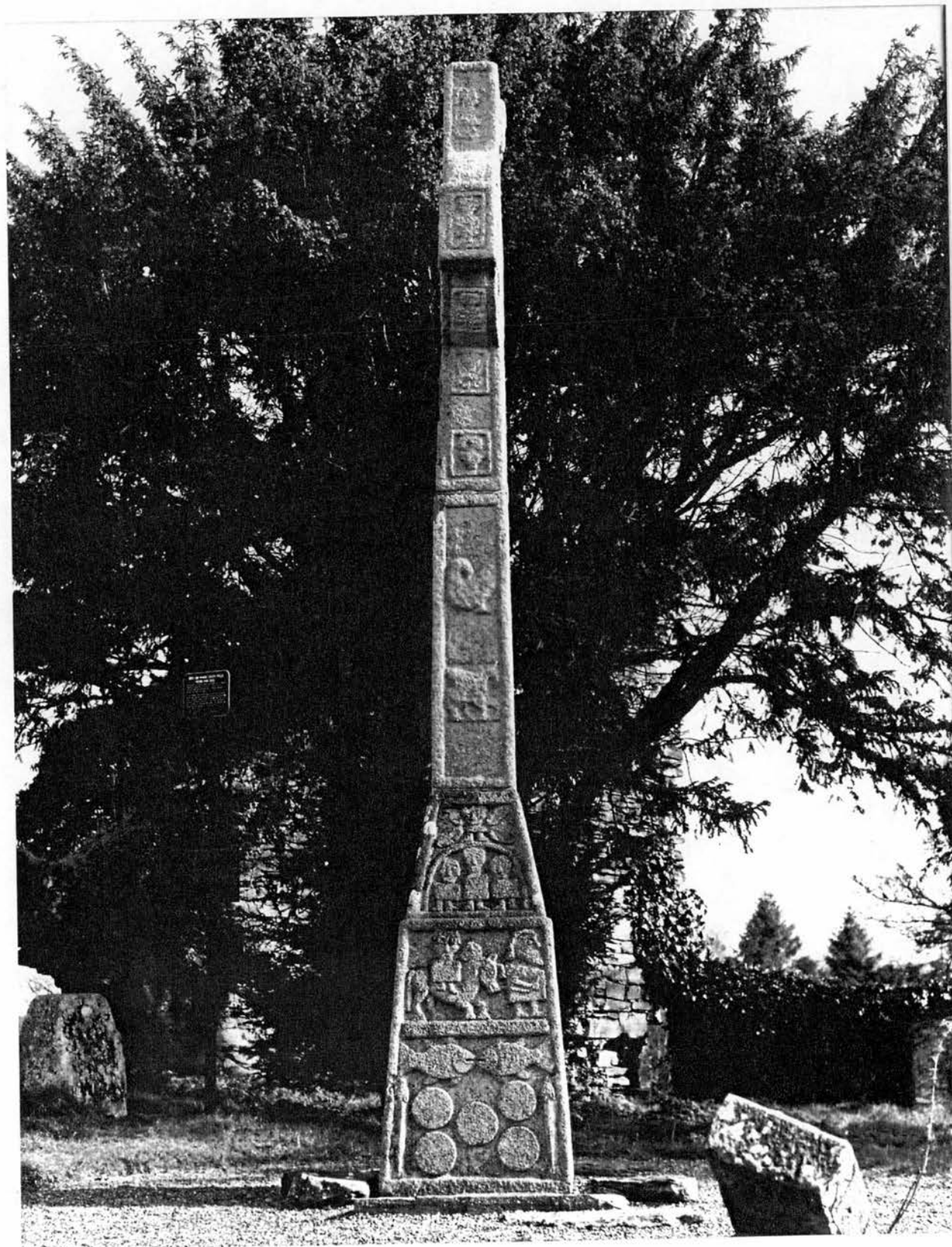


Pl.38  
Cross of Muiredach, Monasterboice, Co.Louth  
south face  
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Pl.39

Moone Cross, Co.Kildare - south face  
(Copyright: The Office of Public Works, Ireland)



Pl.40  
Dunfallandy, Perth  
(Photo: T.E.Gray courtesy of RCAHMS)



Pl.41  
Logierait, Perth  
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Pl.42  
Bullion (Invergowrie), Dundee  
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Pl.43  
St.Madoes, Perth  
(Copyright: RCAHMS)





Pl.44  
Cross of <sup>the</sup> Scriptures - east face (Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly).  
(Photo: P. Harbison)



Pl.45  
Market Cross, Kells - south face  
(Copyright: Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland)



Pl.46  
Clonmacnois South, Clonmacnois, Co.Offaly  
east face  
(Photo: P.Harbison)





P1.47  
Cossans, Angus  
(Photo: T.E.Gray courtesy of RCAHMS)



Pl.48  
Mortlach, Banffshire  
(Photo: T.E.Gray courtesy of RCAHMS)

